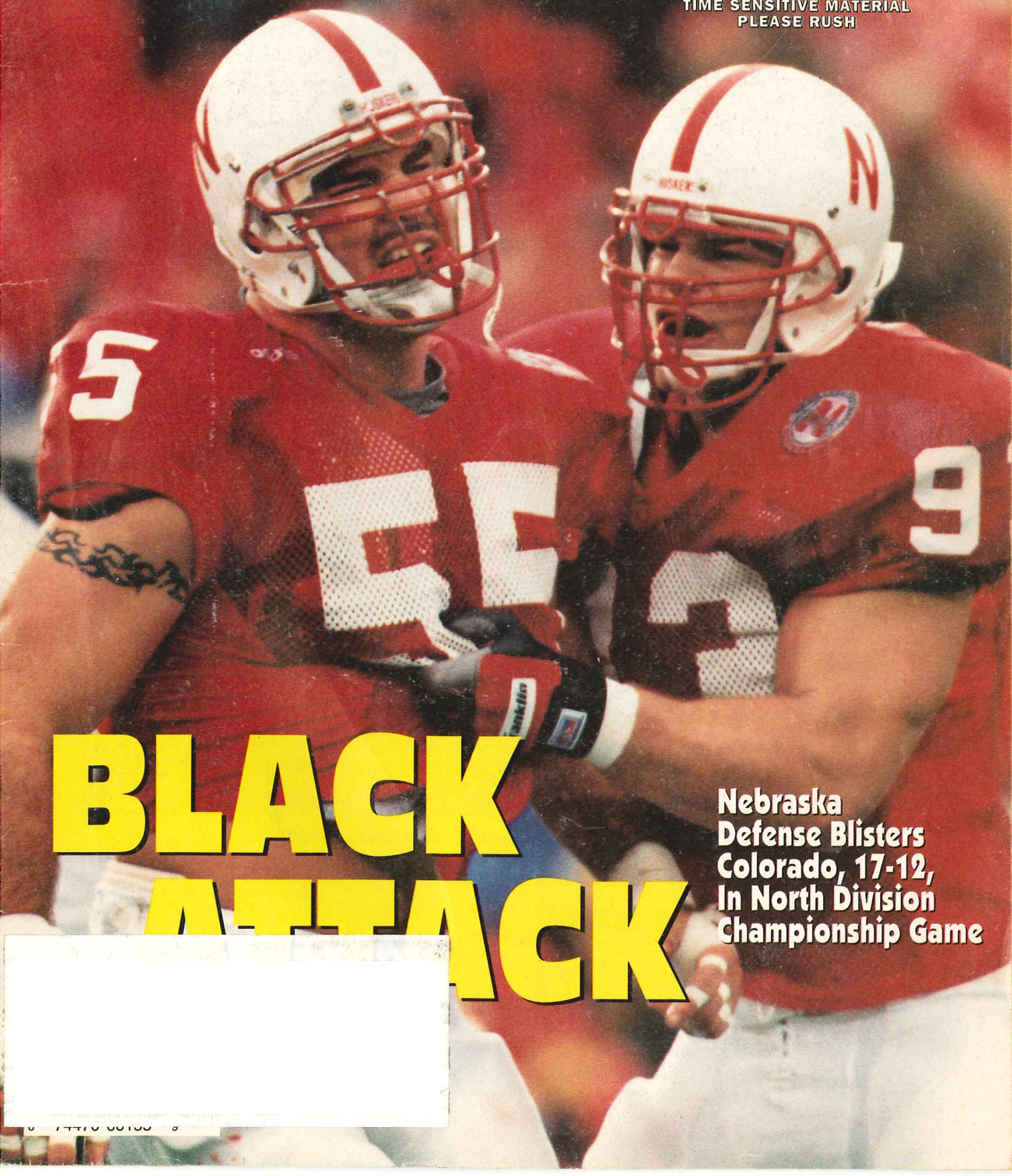


Huskers Illustrated

DECEMBER 7, 1996 • \$2.95
Volume 16, No. 18
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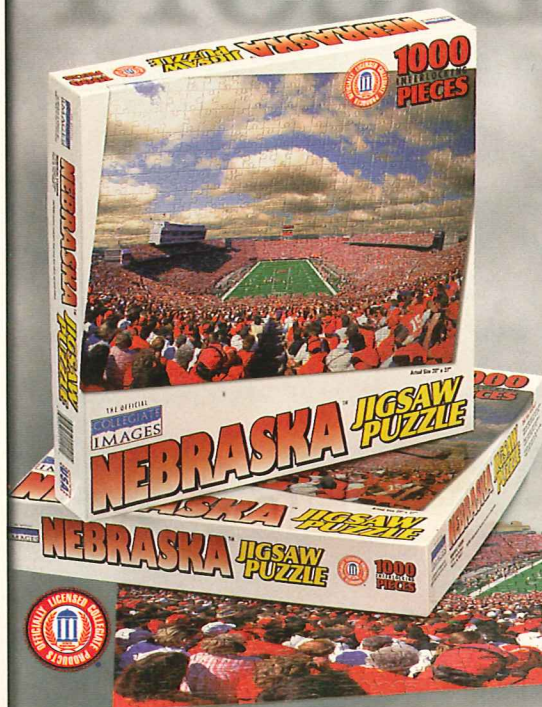
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Huskers Illustrated (ISSN 0279-3474) is published weekly from September through November except open dates; bi-monthly June/July; monthly January through May, August. Single issue cost \$2.95; subscription rate for one year (17 issues) is \$49.90. First Class postage is available for an additional charge of \$16.00 per year. Foreign postage \$34.00.

Huskers Illustrated is published by College Sports Communications, Inc., 4099 McEwen, Suite 350, Dallas, Texas 75244-5039, (972) 742-2000 or (800) 397-3715. Periodicals paid at Dallas, Texas and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Huskers Illustrated*, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501.

Address all editorial related correspondence to *Huskers Illustrated*, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501.

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Customer Service
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Monday - Friday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
(Central Time)

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Publisher: huskerspub@xcscx.com

Editor: huskersedit@xcscx.com

Circulation: huskerscirc@xcscx.com

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Adjusting to the post-football era of life won't be tough for Mike Minter after the lessons he has learned at Nebraska.

By Mike Babcock

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The state of Texas has long been a hotbed for high school football and a perfect recruiting ground for the Huskers.

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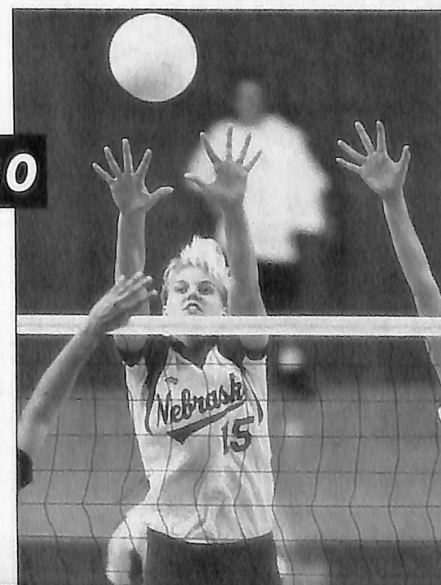
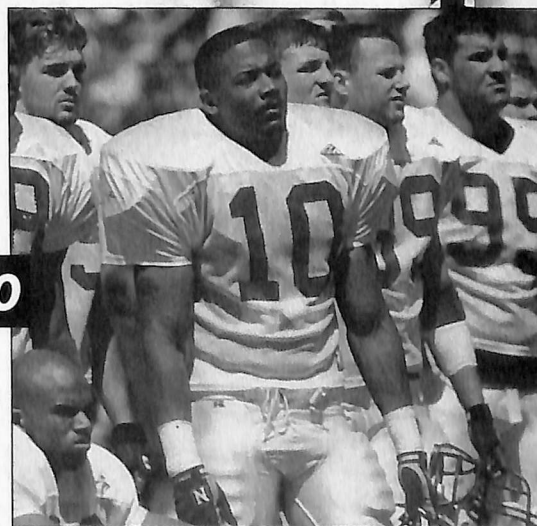
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LETTERS

I, like a lot of people I know, concur with what Chris Greer said in his "From The Editor," (Nov. 29) column. Soccer is not my favorite sport. In fact, I, like Mr. Greer, don't watch it at all. But you've still got to admire what the Nebraska soccer team has accomplished in only its third season.

John Walker has done a great job building a solid program from the ground up with mainly walk-on players. I'm not sure if parity exists in NCAA soccer yet, but remaining undefeated is a tremendous accomplishment.

Sherry Teggin
tegg@aol.com

I'm real stingy about giving up my *Huskers Illustrated* pages to anything other than football, but in the case of soccer, I don't mind. What does it say about the University of Nebraska's athletic program when the football and volleyball teams can win national titles and then a year later, both with the addition of a young soccer team, are competing for titles again. I think that Nebraska alumni are really fortunate to have a great overall program.

Terrance Handley
St. Louis, Mo.

Mike Babcock makes a good point when he says that Scott Frost should be the Big 12 quarterback, ("Frost Is The Big 12's Best Quarterback," Nov. 29). Koy Detmer has put up good numbers, but he's a product of the system Colorado runs. All loyalties aside, I've always felt that an option quarterback has a much tougher job than a drop-back passer. While Frost hasn't flourished in his first year like Tommie Frazier may have, he has kept the Huskers rolling despite some tough bumps.

I guess the vote isn't for MVP, because Frost has been that for the Huskers this year. With the depletion of talent at the position, maybe he will get the nod next year in a less political vote.

Sam Voskel
Omaha, Neb.

You've got to feel for Terrell Farley. Here's a kid who had the world waiting for him. Now he's left to find his own way. All-American honors. NFL early draft pick. It was all there. Who knows, it may still be.

The sad thing is that I've met Farley a couple of times and he is one of the nicest people you could

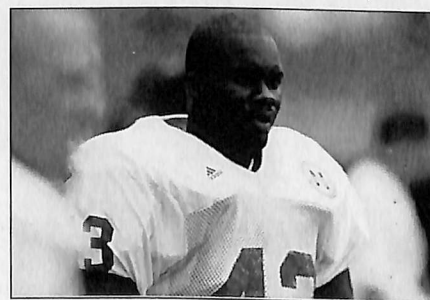
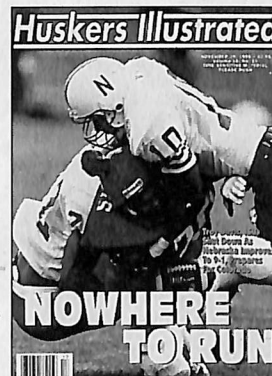
ever want to associate with. You know what they say about nice guys finishing last? Sometimes they do it to themselves.

I have to commend Tom Osborne for suspending Farley, but at the same time offering to help him on a personal

level.

Hopefully, Farley can put his problems behind him and lead a solid life.

Carter Townsend
Omaha, Neb.



Farley suspended for the season.

The Big 12 got a lot of publicity for its football conference and we all know how that went. Did someone say "overrated?" The conference will get its props this fall with the beginning of basketball season.

Your Big 12 hoops preview (Nov. 29) shows that on paper, this is going to be a conference that can rival the ACC and Big East. There appear to be at least seven teams (possibly eight) that can make the NCAA Tournament. If the Big 10 can get the same number in each year, then the selection committee better get ready to bump some other teams because the Big 12 means business.

Sammy Taker
St. Paul, Minn.

Please send your comments and questions to **Letters**, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501. Or fax them to us at (972) 851-1720. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length.

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Time Flies When You're Having Fun Working

First year in the booth for Pinnacle has provided plenty of memories

For Nebraska's coaches and players, it's been a long and sometimes difficult season. But to me, it still seems like only a few weeks have passed since last July when I came on board with the Pinnacle Sports Network. It was shortly thereafter when various groups and individuals requested that I come to their dinners and meetings to speak to their members. We arranged dates that, at the time, seemed to be a long way off. Well, some of those have already passed, and more wait in the near future.

It's been quite a ride in this business since my first experience as a sports broadcaster. That came because of Nebraska sports-casting legend Dick Perry, who was doing Husker play-by-play broadcasts for radio station KFOR in Lincoln. Dick and I bumped into each other at the renowned culinary castle, Denny's Restaurant, across from the University of Nebraska campus.

Dick asked me if I would be interested in joining his broadcast crew. I told him I probably wouldn't because I was fresh out of law school and aimed at starting my career. Secondly, I had no experience and didn't know a microphone from a xylophone. Dick assured me I could do it and encouraged me to at least give it a try. The Nebraska spring game was coming up and he asked me to do the first half.

He told me they had asked two other people to do the second half.

Dick was very supportive during my athletic career at Nebraska, and I owed him one. Besides, any guy who's from Iowa and played in the Cleveland Indians' organization needs either a shrink or lots of support himself.

We all showed up for the audition

from hell. Surprisingly, however, it went pretty well. I really enjoyed the afternoon, and Dick, along with former Husker Jim Huge, made me feel at ease.



**By
ADRIAN
FIALA**

The following Monday, I got a phone call from Dick. In his best Arlo Guthrie style, he said: "You're our boy." That was if I wanted the spot, which I did. And that's how it all got started.

The first year, I learned a lot from Dick, Jim Miller and my sideline sidekick, Bill Wood. Bill learned just one thing from me down there... how to stay out of the way.

Sometimes, the sidelines can be

Isaiah M. Hipp provided many great quotes from the sideline.



dangerous. Every so often, you will see a sideline media person get wiped out by some football player flying out of bounds.

The next three years, I roamed the sidelines, home and away, always looking for the field-level happenings that affected the game but were not readily discernible from the broadcast booth or the stands.

Add an unusual element. Take the mike out to mid-field for the live coin toss and comments from the referee. Fire the emotions with an interview of former Husker Budge

Porter, confined to a wheelchair by a football neck injury, and his dad, Mort, and then a year later, watch with burning pride as Budge made his way down the sidelines on crutches, as he said he would. Listen as Isaiah M. Hipp comes trotting off the field after a dazzling touchdown run, leaving defenders in his wake, and telling those around him: "I hypnotized them." Those things all happened long ago, but it seems like it was just a couple of years ago.

I moved to the booth the next year to work with Tim Moreland. The first game we did was Nebraska-Iowa. The Huskers lost 10-6. Things got better, and I continued to learn from Tim, who has perhaps the best God-given voice and pace for radio broadcasting.

The last year we did Husker broadcasts before the bidding process narrowed it to one station, I had the great fortune to work with one of the legends in the broadcast industry, Ray Scott. When I first heard Scott was coming in to do Nebraska football play-by-play, I didn't believe it. My Sunday afternoons used to be filled with the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi and the voice of the Packers, Ray Scott. He could mesmerize the listener with his voice.

Ray and I developed a lasting friendship, which continues to this day. As he approaches 80, he's still behind the mike with his new sports radio venture in Dyersville, Iowa, and as his bio states: "I will never retire." No, he will not.

Jim Rose of KLIN and Steve Alvis and Jim Carmichael at NETV gave me additional opportunities to keep my broadcast skills at work.

It was the sum total of all these broadcast experiences that culminated in a return to the Husker booth. Were it not for Dale Jensen, chairman of Pinnacle Sports, and Paul Aaron, its president, this would not have happened.

When we all met at the Omaha Press Club it seems like it was just moments ago. It is a memory that will last forever. ■

All Guts, No Glory

After four years and one spring, Bryce Miller leaves Nebraska with many memories despite little playing time and not earning a varsity letter

Bryce Miller is among the 24 seniors who will finish their football careers at Nebraska in the next few weeks. He is a walk-on from tiny Elmwood, Neb., and he plays rush end. He is the first graduate of Elmwood-Murdock High School ever to play Division I-A football, he says proudly.

**By
MIKE
BABCOCK**

Miller's name hasn't been included on the depth chart released by the sports information office each week. The depth chart lists only the top three units. And he isn't one of the top three.

He's never been that high on the depth chart, in four years and one spring. He hasn't played enough to earn a letter, for that matter. But he has stuck it out when many others have fallen by the wayside.

"I've thought a lot about quitting," Miller said recently.

He didn't want those words to be misinterpreted, however.

"I've thought about it," he said. "But I've never thought about doing it."

That's an important distinction for someone who has lived his dream the last four years. He'll put on pads and his No. 83 jersey for the last time when Nebraska plays in a bowl game, which will be his fourth. Then he'll become a former Cornhusker. And then, "I'm going to miss it," Miller said.

"Some guys are saying they're glad this is going to be it," he said. "But I don't say that. When I'm sitting in the stands next year, I know I'm going to miss it terribly . . . the games, anyway."

That Miller is even on the team is remarkable. Nebraska's walk-on program has become more selective as a result of the NCAA's efforts to

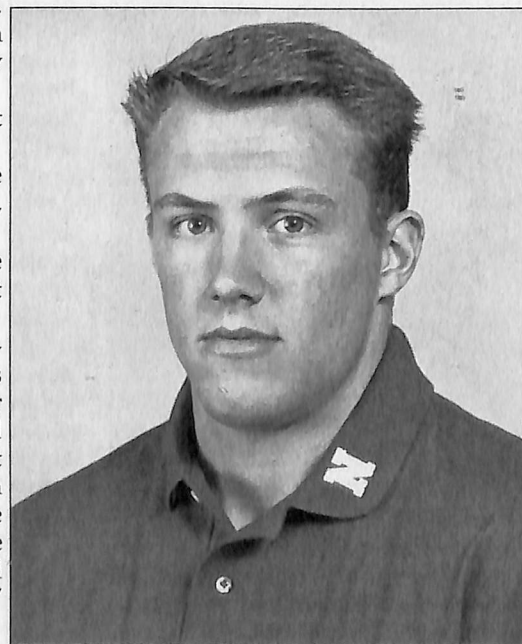
limit football rosters. Most walk-ons are recruited, and those who aren't have to provide film from their high school games for the coaches to evaluate.



The coaches never watched film of Miller because he didn't join the team until second semester of his freshman year. Had it depended on film, he wouldn't have been allowed to walk on, anyway.

"There wasn't much film to watch," said Miller, who played in only six football games, total, during his junior and senior years at Elmwood-Murdock. He was sidelined by a broken arm. He "messed up" his back. And, in his senior season, he suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

He didn't have knee surgery until spring. "I wore a big brace and



played basketball," he said.

He was still rehabilitating the knee during his first semester at Nebraska. He was a regular at the Rec Center in the fall, working out and lifting weights to strengthen the knee so he could try out for the team. He planned to walk on, but "I didn't tell a soul," Miller said. Not even his parents knew.

"I wanted to go home and be able to say: 'Guess what?'"

If this seems to be getting "curiouser and curiouser," to quote "Alice in Wonderland," there's more.

Miller was among 36 would-be Cornhuskers tested before winter conditioning in 1993. He was one of only two invited to participate in the winter conditioning class. And he was the only one who survived spring practice to earn a place on the team. He began as a tight end, then moved to rush end.

He didn't get in a game his first season, and he played in only one his second, against Pacific. Playing for the first time "was amazing," said Miller. The most memorable experience, however, has been coming through the tunnel and into Memorial Stadium before the opening kickoff. "Even as a senior, it gets you psyched to hear the crowd go crazy," he said. "Just knowing you're a part of it . . ."

Remaining a part of it hasn't been easy. Miller's nursing major has placed considerable demands on his time. He has missed Tuesday practices this fall because he spent all day at Lincoln's Saint Elizabeth Community Health Center, beginning at 7 a.m. and not finishing until about 5:30 p.m.

He also has had classes beginning

"When I'm sitting in the stands next year, I know I'm going to miss it terribly. . . the games, anyway."

— Bryce Miller

at 7 a.m. on Monday and Wednesday. Thursdays and Fridays have been a little better. His classes haven't begun until 8 a.m. "I'm not much at sleeping," he said. "The coaches are really good about it. They understand. They just want me to be out here whenever I can."

Miller figures he could have played at a small college. That he has survived four years at Nebraska is evidence he probably could have been a starter at some schools. Every major college football player, no matter where he might be on the depth chart, has ability greater than the norm. For Miller, however, playing elsewhere wouldn't have been nearly as satisfying as being a Cornhusker.

He grew up on a farm with Nebraska football. "Ever since I was a little kid, every Saturday that Nebraska played, I had a radio with me, tuned to the game," he said. "It's the dream of every kid who grows up in Nebraska. I can't think of any other place I could have gone and done this. There's no other place I would have wanted to do this. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Not being able to have a job, not having much money . . . I've got the rest of my life to work, to go hunting on Saturdays."

As for not getting to play much, "the attitude I've always had is, you don't have to be the very best of the best. A lot of guys, if they're not going to be No. 1 and starting, they won't play. If everybody had that attitude, not much would get accomplished. There would be only 22 players on the team."

If there were ever times when Miller seriously questioned what he was doing, he has long since forgotten. "All it took was going to Miami," he said, referring to his sophomore year, when Nebraska defeated Miami in the Orange Bowl to win the first of its two national championships.

"That was something you can't ever replace . . . same with the Fiesta Bowl."

Miller has two national championship rings and a lifetime's worth of memories.

"I think it would have been difficult for somebody who didn't have the mental drive, the willpower. People don't realize the hours the players, and coaches, have to put in here," he said.

But, he said: "I have kind of a stubborn attitude. I looked at it as a challenge." ■

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Needing Pay For Play

The NCAA needs to consider a playoff system which monetarily benefits the schools and the players

R

ecently, I had a conversation with a friend regarding college football playoffs. I referred to the fact that Nebraska had defeated Colorado for the right to play in the first-ever Big

12 playoff.

Neither she nor I were up-to-date on how the system worked, or how it fit in to what the national polls do as far as determining a national champion. She was under the impression that there should be some type of overall playoff system in place for major college football because all the other major college sports for men and women (basketball, baseball, volleyball, soccer, etc.) had some type of NCAA-sponsored playoff to determine the nation's No. 1 team.

"What will the Big 12 playoff game determine?" she asked.

"It will decide who has the right to go to the Sugar Bowl," I replied.

"Will the Huskers play for the national championship then?" she asked.

I told her they might because Ohio State had lost to Michigan, and the Buckeyes will play Arizona State in the Rose Bowl. If they beat Arizona State on New Year's Day and Nebraska wins the Big 12 playoff and then wins the Sugar Bowl game, the Huskers almost certainly would get at least a share of their "3-peat."

Arizona State, which beat Nebraska, is ranked ahead of the Huskers in the polls (*Associated Press* and *CNN/USA Today*), so the Sun Devils will have to lose the Rose Bowl for Nebraska to have a chance.

My friend still didn't understand. She was really getting confused by the system.

"If we have a conference playoff, why can't we have a national playoff?" she asked.

I told her, in my opinion, it's because the universities are con-

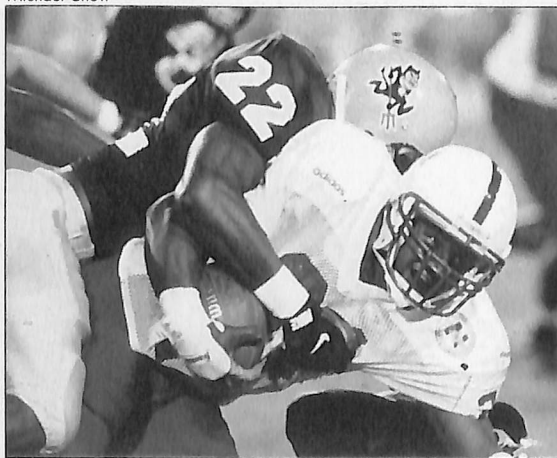
cerned that they might lose some home game revenue, for one thing. It would be very difficult to extend the season in order to establish a national playoff system because there is no financial incentive for the players and schools would be emphasizing athletics over education. I also explained that playing fewer home games would be a revenue risk for some schools that did not qualify for the playoffs. It would be lucrative for those that did, of course.

Teams play 11-game schedules now, with conference playoffs and games like the Kickoff Classic and Pigskin Classic giving some teams as many as 12 games before the bowls. If we had a national playoff, teams probably would have to be limited to 10 regular-season games, at most.



**By
JOHNNY
RODGERS**

Michael Chow



Although the teams won't play again, Arizona State is still a thorn in Nebraska's side.

That would cost money.

My friend suggested that the playoff system could be set up so that the money from one game, or even more, could be dedicated to a student-athlete fund to help players who were in need of financial assistance, based on their families' incomes. Well, that system of sharing revenue with student-athletes sounds good, but the NCAA, which

I affectionately refer to as "No Cash At All," doesn't believe the players need to have any more money than they presently receive, which is none.

I was talking to a player the other day and asked about his financial situation as it related to school. He told me he was a sophomore in eligibility but a junior in school. He receives a housing allowance, and he gets to eat two meals a day at the training table at no charge, lunch and dinner. Although he feels very lucky to be playing football at Nebraska, he has a lot of financial pressure. His rent takes up most of the housing allowance, with little left to pay for utilities. He does his laundry at a friend's house.

He took a deep breath and declared that although his mother was proud of him, she could not afford to send him money because of her own financial difficulties.

The most troubling thing for some of these players is that sometimes after a big game, they have to go home to an empty refrigerator and not have anything to eat until the next day.

Back in the 1970s when I was playing, students were allowed to receive tickets to the games, based on the years they lettered. A senior could receive seven or eight tickets. We also could receive such things as free movie passes and a small amount of money for laundry. It wasn't much. But it was better than nothing.

Today, the system is calling for a restructuring and the NCAA must take the initiative and answer the call. Revisions could help student-athletes and maybe lessen some of the problems that student-athletes have off the field, which often are connected to their financial situations.

In the future, I believe the system will change, particularly if society has to demand it. And I think a national playoff for major college football teams could be used to pick up the cost. ■



By Allen Verbrugge

The class of the Big 12 North collides with that of the Big 12 South in the first conference championship game. In the preseason, Texas and Nebraska were expected to reach the conference zenith. Both did so, but in entirely different ways.

Nebraska won an all-out war with Colorado. Both teams survived, undefeated in conference, to the season's final day, when the Huskers emerged victorious.

Texas, too, had to win on the season's final day, but with two conference losses, the clash for the South Division drew little fanfare as claims were raised as to how much better the North Division was than the South Division.

While they have struggled this season, the Longhorns are not without talent, and might matchup favorably with the Cornhuskers. Granted, Nebraska is a heavy favorite, but anything is possible in a game of this magnitude.

After a loss to Colorado earlier in the season, Texas seemingly dropped out of the race for the South title. But the Longhorns quickly turned things around,

including a win over Texas Tech to regain the South Division lead.

Texas fully believes that it belongs in this game.

"Our goal from the start of the season was to get to the Big 12 Championship Game," cornerback

Bryant Westbrook said. "Our attitude and confidence level is really back up. We had a lot of tough breaks at the beginning of the season, but we made up our minds after that Colorado game that we were a good football team and that we were going to win our last few games."

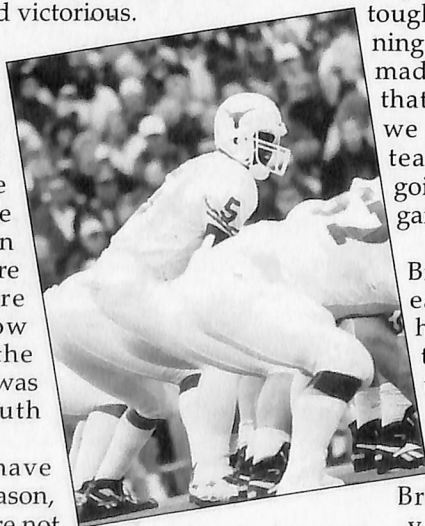
Quarterback James Brown, who struggled early in the season, is heating up. Through the first four games of the season, Brown had managed only 479 yards through the air.

Over his next seven, Brown threw for 1,636 yards and 12 touchdowns. Through 11 games, Brown completed 151-of-271 passes (55.7 percent) for 2,115 yards (192.3 yards per game) and 16 touchdowns.

But Brown has not been without his mistakes. He has been hampered by 10 interceptions.

The two teams also have in common the presence of some powerful running backs.

SCOUTING



Quarterback James Brown (5) has renewed confidence under center.

PRESS PICKS

• Mike Babcock, Huskers Illustrated

Any remaining doubts about the quality of Nebraska's defense should have been laid to rest during the Colorado game. It would take an extraordinary offense to beat the Cornhuskers. Texas has a very good offense, maybe even an excellent offense. But it's not extraordinary.

The optimum conditions inside the TransWorld Dome will allow Nebraska's option offense to function much better than it did against Colorado. Under the circumstances, the Big 12 couldn't have hoped for a better matchup in the playoff game.

Nebraska 42, Texas 12.

• Todd Henrichs, Grand Island (Neb.) Independent

The Longhorns have very little to lose and plenty of respect to gain. Nebraska has plenty to lose, but plenty yet to gain. The "three-peat" dream lives until Jan. 1.

Nebraska 30, Texas 20.

• Brian Rosenthal, York (Neb.) News Times

The Black Shirts will continue to dominate, while the Husker offense will thrive in the warmer, drier confines of the TransWorld Dome. Look for Nebraska to roll up some impressive numbers on the ground, particularly by way of the option.

Nebraska 38, Texas 10.

• Jason Becker, Horns Illustrated

The Cornhusker offense is nothing like it was under Tommie Frazier, but it is effective enough to complement the defense.

Nebraska 35, Texas 10.

All-American guard Dan Neil (69) has thrown lead blocks all season for running backs Shon Mitchell (3) and Ricky Williams.

The Longhorns look to senior Shon Mitchell and sophomore Ricky Williams to pace their ground effort. In 1995, Mitchell gained 1,099 yards on 176 carries and scored 10 touchdowns. Williams was a nice complement, contributing an additional 990 yards on 160 carries, with eight touchdowns.

The 1996 efforts of the running backs again have been valuable. Through 11 games, Mitchell has gained 609 yards on 110 carries. Williams has stepped up as the team's leading rusher, with 1,305 yards on 197 carries. The hip pointer that bothered Mitchell early in the season has healed, and the duo makes for a bruising and intimidating combination. Senior Priest Holmes is another viable running option for the Horns.

While Texas' so-called BMW backfield (Brown, Mitchell, Williams) has sputtered occasionally, it has the ability to shift into a higher gear when everything is properly maintained.

Senior wideout Mike Adams twice a semifinalist for the Biletnikoff Award, is the all-time leader in career receiving yards in Texas football history. After hauling in 53 balls for 876 yards in 1995, Adams has had another big year so far in 1996, catching 50 passes for 850 yards and five touchdowns. Matt Davis, Mike Scarborough and Wane McGarity all will see time at



Corby D. Roberts

the receiver slot.

The Longhorn offensive line has been forced to gain experience as the season progressed, but now is a unit that plays with some togetherness and ability.

"The offensive line and the defensive line together have consistently improved," Mackovic said. "A lot of that has to do with playing together, experience and maturity."

The group is led by senior guard Dan Neil (selected second-team All-America by *Football News* magazine), a semifinalist for the Outland Trophy.

"All I know is when I went over to shake hands with (Kansas coach) Glen Mason at the end of that game,

he said, 'Where is 69 (Neil), I want to talk to him. He is the best player I have seen.' When you get it from another coach who goes out of his way, you know that you have some-one special."

Also returning as a starter is junior center Ryan Fiebiger. Three sophomores make up the rest of the offensive front, with Octavious Bishop and Jay Humphrey at tackles and Ben Adams at left guard.

Senior tight end Pat Fitzgerald always is a pass-receiving threat for the Longhorns.

Through 11 games, Fitzgerald ranked second among Big 12 tight ends in receptions with 32, third in receiving yards with 472, and has

NEBRASKA VS. TEXAS TWO-DEEPS

HUSKER OFFENSE

SE	5	Brendan Holbein	5-9	190	Sr
	6	Kenny Cheatham	6-4	210	So
LT	77	Adam Treu	6-6	300	Sr
	73	Fred Pollack	6-4	305	Jr
LG	75	Chris Dishman	6-3	310	Sr
	63	James Sherman	6-2	300	Fr
C	67	Aaron Taylor	6-1	305	Jr
	59	Josh Heskew	6-3	280	Jr
RG	64	Jon Zatechka	6-2	290	Jr
	62	Matt Hoskinson	6-1	280	Jr
RT	70	Eric Anderson	6-4	300	Jr
	78	Kory Mikos	6-5	295	Sr
TE	90	Tim Carpenter	6-3	250	Jr
or	34	Vershan Jackson	6-0	234	Jr
QB	7	Scott Frost	6-3	215	Jr
	11	Matt Turman	5-11	185	Sr
FB	28	Brian Schuster	5-11	225	Sr
	40	Joel Makovicka	5-11	230	So
IB	30	Ahman Green	6-0	210	So
	4	DeAngelo Evans	5-9	210	Fr
WB	25	Jon Vedral	5-11	205	Sr
	14	Lance Brown	5-11	190	So
PK	35	Kris Brown	5-10	200	So

LONGHORN DEFENSE

DE	95	Gray Mosier	6-5	270	So
	52	Cedric Woodard	6-2	277	Fr
NG	64	Casey Hampton	6-1	317	Fr
	96	Chris Akins	6-1	290	Jr
DT	96	Chris Akins	6-1	290	Jr
	90	Clarence Martin	6-3	283	So
OLB	45	Dwight Kirkpatrick	6-1	230	Jr
	93	Michael Boudoin	6-2	225	So
ILB	46	Dusty Renfro	6-0	230	So
	59	Kyle Richardson	6-0	232	Jr
ILB	50	Tyson King	6-0	230	Sr
	55	Anthony Hicks	6-0	235	Fr
OLB	49	Aaron Humphrey	6-3	232	Fr
	43	Jonathan Hickerson	6-0	230	Sr
RC	2	Taje Allen	5-11	188	Fr
	28	Anton Hector	6-1	190	Fr
FS	16	Chris Carter	6-1	207	Sr
	18	Cody Danaher	6-0	212	Sr
SS	17	Tre Thomas	6-2	207	Sr
	38	Aaron Babino	6-1	210	Fr
LC	30	Bryant Westbrook	6-0	195	Sr
	9	Quinton Wallace	6-1	190	Jr
P	15	Mark Schultis	6-1	200	Jr

LONGHORN OFFENSE

SE	86	Matt Davis	6-5	215	Sr
	6	Mike Scarborough	6-0	193	So
LT	75	Octavious Bishop	6-5	305	So
	79	Ben Adams	6-5	297	So
LG	79	Ben Adams	6-5	297	So
	72	Roger Roesler	6-5	308	Fr
C	58	Ryan Fiebiger	6-3	282	Jr
	54	Russell Gaskamp	6-4	285	So
RG	69	Dan Neil	6-2	283	Sr
	65	Travis Wood	6-2	280	So
RT	67	Jay Humphrey	6-7	295	So
	76	Brent Kelly	6-6	290	Jr
TE	81	Pat Fitzgerald	6-2	228	Sr
	82	Derek Lewis	6-2	240	So
QB	5	James Brown	6-0	190	Jr
	10	Richard Walton	6-5	217	So
RB	3	Shon Mitchell	5-10	195	Sr
	33	Priest Holmes	5-10	210	Sr
RB	11	Ricky Williams	6-0	220	So
	29	Gerrod Coleman	6-0	232	Jr
FL	83	Mike Adams	6-1	187	Sr
	8	Wane McGarity	5-8	190	So
PK	4	Phil Dawson	5-11	193	Jr

HUSKER DEFENSE

LRE	93	Jared Tomich	6-2	260	Sr
	57	*Chad Kelsay	6-3	235	So
DT	97	Jeff Ogard	6-6	300	Sr
	99	Jason Wiltz	6-3	295	So
DT	55	Jason Peter	6-4	285	Jr
	74	Scott Saltsman	6-2	270	Sr
RRE	98	Grant Wistrom	6-5	250	Jr
	84	Mike Rucker	6-6	250	So
SLB	28	Jamel Williams	6-2	205	Sr
	46	Brian Shaw	6-0	215	Fr
MLB	44	Jon Hesse	6-4	250	Sr
	56	Jay Foreman	6-1	225	So
WLB	91	Ryan Terwilliger	6-5	225	Sr
	1	Eric Johnson	6-0	205	So
LC	20	Michael Booker	6-2	205	Sr
	12	Mike Fullman	5-7	170	Sr
FS	16	Eric Stokes	5-11	185	Sr
	3	Eric Warfield	6-1	195	Jr
ROV	10	Mike Minter	5-10	190	Sr
	4	Octavious McFarlin	5-11	195	Jr
RC	22	Ralph Brown	5-11	180	Fr
	26	Jerome Peterson	5-7	185	Fr
P	19	Jesse Kosch	6-0	185	Jr

Depth charts were compiled Dec. 1, 1996 and may change before game time. # = duplicate number * = injured, but probable for game

two touchdown catches.

On the defensive side for the Longhorns, the UT secondary is among the most talented groups in the nation. There is no lack of experience — all four defensive backs are returning starters — and each had earned three letters prior to this season.

In addition to being excellent in man-to-man coverage, Westbrook has blocked two punts in 1996, one of which he returned for a touchdown. He also has 40 tackles and two interceptions on the year.

Free safety Chris Carter is fourth on the UT all-time interception list with 13, and fourth on the all-time tackling chart at Texas with 391. Taje Allen is the other veteran cornerback, and Tre Thomas handles chores at strong safety.

The Texas defensive front, contrarily, was not a seasoned group going into the 1996 season. The line needed to replace Tony Brackens, who departed a year early to pursue an NFL career. Chris Akins, though not 100 percent healthy, leads the defensive line at defensive tackle.

Linebacker Tyson King has led the Horns in tackling over the last two years (82 in 1996; third best).

Freshman Aaron Humphrey has fought his way into the starting slot at rush outside linebacker, while junior Dwight Kirkpatrick and sophomore Michael Boudoin see time at drop outside linebacker. Dusty Renfro had 64 tackles in 1995 to lead all SWC freshmen defenders. Renfro will contribute along with Kyle Richardson at inside linebacker.

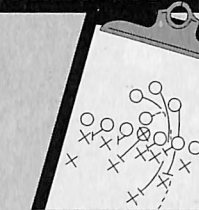
"On defense we have made a lot of improvements the last few games as compared to the beginning of the season," Renfro said. "We've faced some great running backs and some great offenses, but our defense has focused on fundamentals and tackling and that has made a big difference."

The Longhorns enter the title game riding a four-game winning streak, which followed a 3-4 start.

"I think we've come together and we're playing good football right now," Kirkpatrick said. "Maybe we're more intense or maybe it's because it's a do-or-die situation, but toward the end of the season, we play our best football."

The two teams are less than familiar with each other, but make no mistakes about it, Texas and Nebraska will become very familiar with each other's tendencies in the eight days preceding the game. ■

TEXAS SEASON STATISTICS



TEAM STATS

	TEXAS	OPP
Touchdowns	50	29
By Rushing	30	20
By Pass	18	7
By Return	2	2
First Downs	263	224
Rushing	123	117
Passing	114	86
Penalty	26	21
Rushing Attempts	459	490
Net Yards Rushing	2,369	2,198
Avg. Per Game	215.4	199.8
Net Yards Passing	2,653	1,880
Passes Attempted	342	298
Passes Completed	193	140
Had Intercepted	11	9
Avg. Per Game	241.2	170.9
Total Offensive Plays	801	788
Total Yards	5,022	4,078
Avg. Yards Game	456.5	370.7
Avg. Yards Per Play	6.3	5.2
Fumbles/Lost	22/11	19/13
Penalties/Yards	90/768	84/740
Punts/Yards	48/1,819	68/2,310
Avg. Per Punt	37.9	34.0
Sacks By/Yds. Lost	16/119	17/101
3rd Down Conv.	60-148	55-164
Percentage	.405	.335
4th Down Conv.	5-9	6-14
Percentage	.556	.429
Avg. Possession Time	29:14	30:46

1996 TEXAS FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Record (Conference) — 7-4 (6-2)

Aug. 31	Missouri	W, 40-10
Sept. 7	New Mexico St.	W, 41-7
Sept. 21	Notre Dame	L, 27-24
Sept. 28	@ Virginia	L, 37-13
Oct. 5	Oklahoma State	W, 71-14
Oct. 12	vs. Oklahoma %	L, 30-27
Oct. 26	@ Colorado	L, 28-24
Nov. 2	Baylor	W, 28-23
Nov. 9	@ Texas Tech	W, 38-32
Nov. 16	@ Kansas	W, 38-17
Nov. 29	Texas A&M	W, 51-15
Dec. 7	vs. Nebraska \$	
# Big 12 Championship Game — St. Louis, Mo.		
% Cotton Bowl — Dallas, Texas		

SCORING BY QUARTERS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	Final
TEXAS	110	116	83	83	3	395
OPPONENTS	47	96	33	58	6	240

INDIVIDUAL STATS

RUSHING

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	Tds.
Williams, R.	11	197	1305	115.0	12
Mitchell, S.	11	110	609	55.4	4
Holmes, P.	11	50	210	18.5	10
Butcher, C.	6	30	141	23.5	1
Brown, J.	11	44	112	10.2	2
Brown, R.	5	8	33	6.6	0
Coleman, G.	6	7	16	2.7	1
Adams, M.	11	1	15	1.4	0
McGarity, W.	10	1	14	1.3	0
Barnes, W.	2	1	-2	-1.0	0
Walton, R.	6	8	-22	-3.7	0
Cherry, M.	4	2	-16	-4.0	0

PASSING

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	Tds.
Brown, J.	11	151-271-10	.557	2115	16
Walton, R.	6	38-63-1	.603	509	2
Cherry, M.	4	4-8-0	.500	28	0

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPG	Tds.
Adams, M.	11	50	850	17.0	77.3	5
Fitzgerald, P.	11	32	472	14.8	42.9	2
Williams, R.	11	23	270	11.7	24.5	2
McGarity, W.	11	15	222	14.8	20.2	3
Davis, M.	9	15	136	9.1	15.1	1
Jackson, C.	5	11	126	11.5	25.2	1
Holmes, P.	11	9	113	12.6	10.3	1
Scarborough, M.	7	9	98	14.0	12.3	1
Lewis, D.	8	7	53	7.6	6.6	0
Mitchell, S.	11	6	106	17.7	9.6	0
White, B.	6	6	86	14.3	14.3	0
Scott, D.	4	5	51	10.2	12.8	2

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	Int.	Sacks
Carter, C.	73	35	108	1	0
Humphrey, A.	54	37	91	0	2.5
King, T.	49	43	82	0	1
Renfro, D.	36	37	73	0	0
Thomas, T.	37	33	70	0	0
Hampton, C.	44	20	64	0	1.5
Mosier, G.	36	22	58	2	2
Richardson, K.	24	28	52	2	0
Akins, C.	38	14	52	0	1
Kirkpatrick, D.	26	21	47	2	3
Allen, T.	31	14	45	1	0
Westbrook, B.	34	6	40	2	0
Jones, M.	18	11	29	1	1
Martin, C.	11	11	22	0	0
Boudoin, M.	13	8	21	0	1
Warfield, T.	11	9	20	0	0
Woodard, C.	10	8	18	0	1
Hicks, A.	4	13	17	0	0
Crenshaw, R.	8	4	12	0	0
Danaher, C.	5	7	12	0	0
Goodloe, W.	9	3	12	0	0.5
Babino, A.	7	5	12	0	0
Luckett, D.	8	2	10	0	2.5
Hickerson, J.	5	5	10	0	0
Holmes, T.	4	5	9	0	0
Hector, A.	4	2	6	0	0
Dagley, B.	1	3	4	0	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Dawson, P.	11	4-4	3-5	7-10	2-2	16-21

PUNTING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	Avg.
Schultis, M.	11	46	1818	39.5

PUNT RETURNS

Name	G	No.	Yds.	Tds.	LP
Adams, M.	11	22	216	9.8	0
Westbrook, B.	11	2	47	23.5	1
White, B.	11	2	13	6.5	0
Carter, C.	11	1	1	1.0	0
Holmes, T.	11	1	29	29.0	0
Armstrong, D.	10	1	22	22.0	1

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	G	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Tds.	LP
Scarborough, M.	11	10	203	20.3	0	30
Mitchell, S.	11	11	188	17.1	0	28
Westbrook, B.	11	3	78	26.0	0	34
Jackson, C.	6	3	75	25.0	0	28

DWIGHT KIRKPATRICK was an option quarterback in high school. He was a good option quarterback. So good that he could only find three schools who would recruit him for what he really wanted to do: play defense. Granted, the three schools were Texas, Texas A&M and Oklahoma, but Kirkpatrick was determined to leave his days of rushing for 1,000 yards and passing for another 500 behind him.

Growing up in Waller, Texas, about 45 miles from Aggieland, it seems logical that Kirkpatrick would choose A&M over the Longhorns and Sooners.

"We had the same fight song and the same school colors (as A&M) and they have a great tradition in linebackers," he said. "But it just wasn't the place for me. The atmosphere and the university itself. So I decided to give Texas a try."

So he left his own back yard for

Destined for Defense

the Central Texas Hill Country.

Kirkpatrick did not expect much in his first year as a Longhorn. He was making the transition from safety to outside linebacker and junior Jason Reeves was returning to lay claim on the starting position.

Numerous injuries to the entire linebacker unit forced Kirkpatrick into early action.

"I learned a lot from a lot of mistakes I made," Kirkpatrick said. "I got a chance to see what real football was like. I got a chance to play in a couple of big games like Colorado and A&M and I got a lot of experience."

He played in all 11 games that season, including the Sun Bowl game against 19th-ranked North Carolina, and recorded 40 tackles for the year.

He saw 334 plays at drop outside linebacker and had a career-high nine tackles to add to his first collegiate interception against Texas Tech.

When football season started this fall, an injury again opened a door of opportunity for Kirkpatrick. Starter Matt Jones went down in the Missouri game due to a broken bone in his hand. So Kirkpatrick came in and showed everyone that he's settling in at linebacker and is ready to make some plays.

The second game of the season against New Mexico State, which marked just the third start of his career, served as somewhat of a coming out party for Kirkpatrick.

He intercepted his first pass of the season and was all over the field, batting down passes and pressuring Aggie quarterback Chad Salisbury into intentional grounding penalties. After the game, defensive coordinator Gary Darnell showed little surprise in Kirkpatrick's performance.

"Dwight's been doing that for a while in practice," Darnell said. "He played safety and quarterback in high school, so he has a knack for knowing where the ball is going."

Kirkpatrick knows, however, that he has a good bit of work ahead of him to become the kind of performer UT needs at linebacker.

"If I'm not making plays and tackles then I don't need to be out there," he said. "I know I can play a lot better. I still have to continue to work hard to get better."

In spite of his increased role on the Longhorn defense, Kirkpatrick remains somewhat of a behind-the-scenes player.

"We each do different things better than the other," he explained. "But if we all come together, we're about equal. I've had opportunities to go out there and play a little. It's just a matter of going out and playing hard and doing what the coaches tell you to do."

Though the starting roles were cast before the season ever started, Kirkpatrick knew that the dedication he has for improving himself would provide him with the opportunity to make an impact.

"This spring I just started running and working hard and doing the things I needed to do to get back on the field," he said. "But there are a lot of areas I need to improve. I need to get faster and tackle better and overall just play better."

Longhorn head coach John Mackovic points toward Kirkpatrick's intelligence and high school experience at defensive back as the major factors that have pushed him into the rotation at drop linebacker.

"Dwight's smart and he knows what we do," Mackovic said. "He's a former defensive back with good athletic talent. He's able to run to the ball and get in position to make plays."

The fact that he has played in the secondary is an added bonus for Kirkpatrick being that the primary responsibility for the drop linebacker is pass coverage. ■



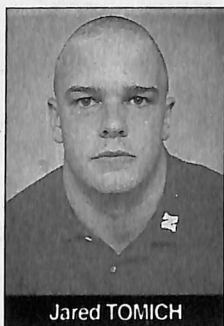
Shunning Aggieland and forgetting his high school days at quarterback, Dwight Kirkpatrick found a home in the UT defense

• by Jason Becker



KEY MATCHUPS

Nebraska vs. Texas



Jared TOMICH

Nebraska Defense vs. Texas Passing Attack

Since beating Florida in last year's Fiesta Bowl, Nebraska has faced only one true passing attack — Colorado. The only Big 12 team to rank in the top 30 nationally in passing, Colorado was 12-of-38 for 226 yards and failed to throw a touchdown pass against the Huskers.

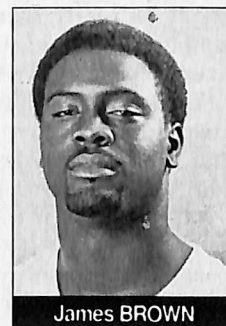
Keyed by junior quarterback James Brown, Texas has the second-best aerial attack in the Big 12, averaging 241.2 yards per game. The problem is that Brown has been up and down all season. Brown's numbers appear to be solid (151-of-271, 2,115 yards and 16 touchdowns), but he has struggled at times. Brown was pulled in the UT loss at Virginia in favor of backup Richard Walton and a mild controversy arose.

Brown's favorite target has been senior Mike Adams, Texas' all-time leading receiver. Adams' numbers are down in 1996, but he has caught 50 passes for 850 yards and five scores this year.

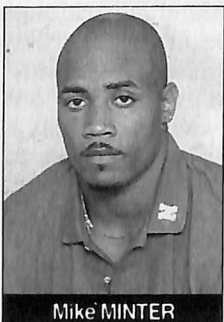
The Longhorns don't count on their passing attack to win games for them, and that's probably a good thing. Nebraska has been more than stingy against the pass, allowing only 86.1 yards per game. Behind seniors Mike Minter and Eric Stokes, the Black Shirts have picked off almost four times as many passes (19) as they've allowed into the end zone (five).

With rush ends Jared Tomich and Grant Wistrom (The Big 12 Coaches' Defensive Player of the Year) pressuring from the side, Brown will have to step up in the pocket and make solid throws, a skill he hasn't shown to be his forte this year.

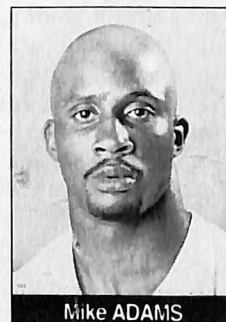
Advantage: NEBRASKA



James BROWN



Mike MINTER



Mike ADAMS

Nebraska Running Game vs. Texas Defense

Texas' No. 1 concern going into the Big 12 Championship game is slowing the Huskers' ground attack, which is the best in the conference. Led by true freshmen noseguard Casey Hampton (64 tackles) and linebacker Aaron Humphrey (91 tackles) in the 3-4 scheme, Texas has had difficulty stopping the run, allowing opponents 199.8 yards per game during the regular season — eighth worst in the conference.

If the Longhorns let Nebraska run for over 200 yards, this game will quickly favor the Huskers.

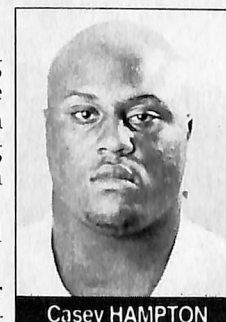
Starting I-back Ahman Green has been hampered by a turf toe injury for most of the season, but even at half speed, he's been too much for most defenses; just ask Iowa State, which Green burned for a career-high 214 yards three weeks ago. Even if Green, who has rushed for 917 yards and seven touchdowns, can't go, the Huskers can go at least two more backs deep without losing much of a step. Senior Damon Benning and true freshman DeAngelo Evans have had solid years, and the fullback position is well-stocked, as usual, with Joel Makovicka and Brian Schuster.

Texas will have a hard time getting penetration behind the Husker line that has Tom Osborne's squad averaging 296.4 yards a game on the ground. After some early-season problems, the big guys up front have settled down and grown comfortable with each other. Guard-turned-center Aaron Taylor has had an All-America-caliber season.

Advantage: NEBRASKA



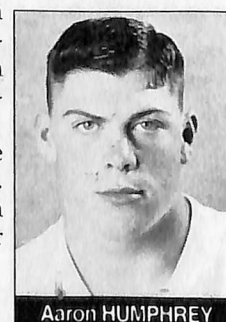
Ahman GREEN



Casey HAMPTON



Aaron TAYLOR



Aaron HUMPHREY

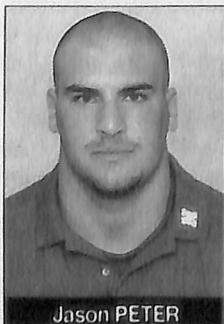
Texas Running Game vs. Nebraska Front

This will be a key area for the Horns. If sophomore Ricky Williams and senior Shon Mitchell can get a running game going, it will take a lot of pressure off of Brown and open up the passing game.

Texas' "BMW" backfield (including Brown, who has rushed for 112 yards on the season) has the ability to do it. Williams has rushed for 1,305 yards on 197 carries, and Mitchell has 664 on 110 tries. Either Mitchell or Williams has rushed for 100 yards in 13 of the last 18 games.

But the Husker defense spent most of the season shutting down their opponents' running game. Nebraska gave up just 71.9 yards on the ground per contest. If the front four of the Huskers can clog up the Horns' running game and force Texas to throw, Brown could be in for a long day.

Advantage: NEBRASKA



Jason PETER



Ricky WILLIAMS



Scott FROST

Nebraska Passing Attack vs. Texas Defense

Nebraska's Scott Frost doesn't have to have an exceptional day in the air for the Huskers to be successful. But he does have to take advantage of what the Longhorn secondary might give him.

After a rough start this year, Frost has become more comfortable throwing the ball. He is at his best running the option, but he isn't a liability through the air, completing 50.6 percent of his passes (89-of-176) for 1,285 yards and 13 touchdowns.

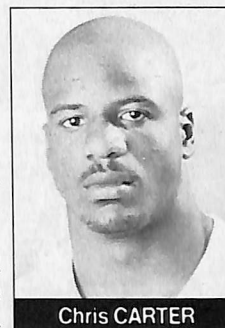
Having sure-handed receivers like Brendan Holbein (20 catches for 292 yards), Jon Vedral (17 for 265), Kenny Cheatham (six for 94) and tight ends Vershan Jackson (13 for 220) and Sheldon Jackson (four for 48) doesn't hurt, either.

But any mistakes Frost makes through the air could be costly, considering the Texas' secondary is led by four seniors. Anchored by cornerback Bryant Westbrook and free safety Chris Carter, the Horns have one of the most dangerous units in the country. Westbrook leads the team with two interceptions, and Carter provides solid double-team help, but both are better known for run support. Carter is the Longhorns' leading tackler and Westbrook has a reputation as the team's hardest hitter.

Teams often throw away from Westbrook, and toward cornerback Tajé Allen. What Allen lacks in coverage ability, he makes up for in speed.

Drop outside linebacker Dwight Kirkpatrick is equally adept at rushing the quarterback, ranking second on the team in sacks (3.0) and tied for first in interceptions (two).

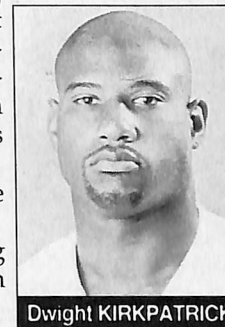
Advantage: NEBRASKA



Chris CARTER



Brendan HOLBEIN



Dwight KIRKPATRICK

Nebraska Special Teams vs. Texas Special Teams

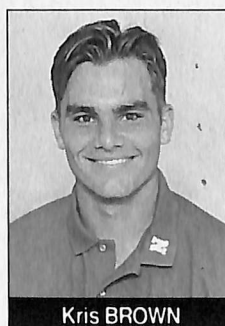
If the game comes down to kicking, give the Huskers the slight edge. Sophomore Kris Brown (from Southlake, Texas) has proved his worth this season, hitting 10 field goals and making 47 PATs.

Texas' Phil Dawson isn't too shabby, either. After recovering from reconstructive knee surgery during the summer, the preseason All-American has connected on 16-of-21 field goals, with a long of 53 against Texas Tech. Dawson hasn't had to kick a game-winner this year, but Texas coach John Mackovic has said he has complete confidence in Dawson if it comes down to a game-winning kick.

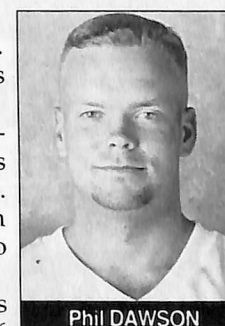
Ranked 10th in the nation, Jesse Kosch has seen his playing time go up this year as the Huskers' punter. Kosch has booted 40 for 1,819 yards and a 45.6 average. Texas' Mark Shultis, ranked 10th in the conference, has hit 46 for 1,818 yards (39.5 average), but has had two blocked.

Both teams have shown they can block punts. Eric Warfield has three of NU's seven. UT's Bryant Westbrook is the Longhorns' big threat. If Nebraska doesn't get to the ball, Mike Fullman and Shevin Wiggins can take it and put the Huskers in good field position. Wiggins is the Big 12's top-rated punt returner with a 13.5 average after returning 13 for 175 yards and one touchdown. NU's defense is so good they don't have enough kickoff returns to rank in the Big 12.

Advantage: NEBRASKA



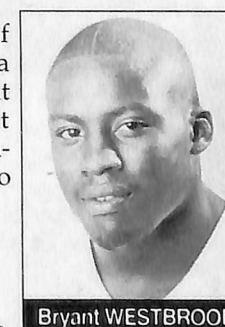
Kris BROWN



Phil DAWSON



Mike FULLMAN



Bryant WESTBROOK

Tom Osborne vs. John Mackovic

It's fair to say that this is the biggest game in Mackovic's career at Texas, due to the conference implications. In the preseason, most thought Texas would have little problem making it to the title game to face the Huskers. But it's been a rough road to St. Louis for the Horns and it has taken its toll on this team.

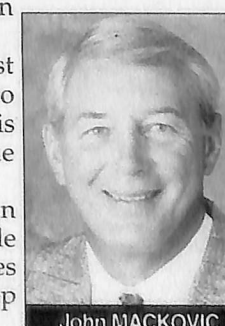
In his five seasons at Texas, Mackovic and the Horns are 5-13-2 against top-25 teams, and have never beaten a team in the top 10 (the closest thing to a win was a 21-21 tie against sixth-ranked Syracuse in 1993). Mackovic now is dealing with the rap of not being able to "win the big one," much like Osborne did for years.

Osborne, who has faced Texas only once (a 19-3 victory in the 1974 Cotton Bowl), will have his team focused and ready. After the early season stumble against Arizona State, the Huskers have responded and overcome liabilities and injuries. A national title still is in reach, and a win over Texas will keep the hope of a "three-peat" alive. That's motivation enough for the Huskers.

Advantage: OSBORNE



Tom OSBORNE



John MACKOVIC

Huskers Clinch North Title, Showdown With Texas

It could be remembered as a defining offensive series in a season that still holds at least a slim possibility of a third consecutive national championship. Depending on how the season plays out, it could become the 1996 version of Nebraska's dramatic, 74-yard drive to the winning touchdown against Oklahoma in the "Game of the Century" at Norman, Okla., 25 years before.

It could be, even though this series didn't end in a touchdown. Not even close. Rather, it ended at the Colorado 35-yard line, third-and-12, after Scott Frost had taken snaps and knelt for 1-yard losses on first and second down in the late-afternoon gloom on the day after Thanksgiving.

The eight-play, 35-yard drive didn't produce six points. It produced three first downs and used up the final seconds of Nebraska's 17-12 victory against Colorado. Its essence was time.

By MIKE BABCOCK

"Probably the best thing we did offensively was that last drive," coach Tom Osborne told reporters afterward. "We just didn't give the ball back to them. We were able to hammer away."

Backing up a few minutes, the drama unfolded like this:

Midway through the fourth quarter, Nebraska held the 17-12 lead, which was seeming more and more tenuous with each offensive snap by the Cornhuskers. After Frost was sacked for an 8-yard loss on third-and-6 from his own 23-yard line, Jesse Kosch came

on to punt for the sixth time.

The junior from Columbus, who averaged 45.8 yards on the six punts, was the first player Osborne mentioned by name during his post-game news conference. "I thought Jesse Kosch did a tremendous job of punting," he said. "I think the kicking game probably, overall, saved our bacon."

Kosch's 41-yard punt put Colorado at its own 44-yard line, first-and-10 with 4:47 remaining, and with most in the crowd of 75,695 calling for the Cornhusker defense to hold one more time.

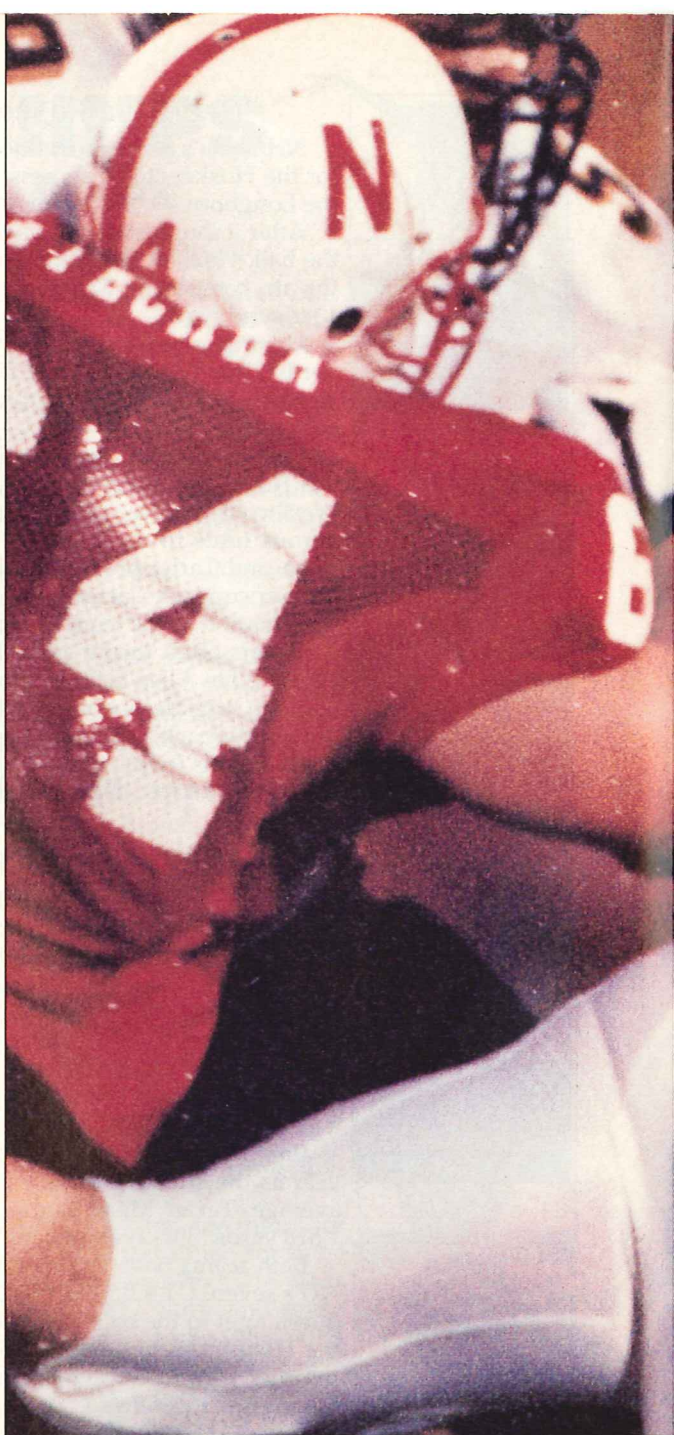
At that point, a few in the crowd might have flashed back to a night in early November of 1990, when the weather conditions were similar and Nebraska took a 12-0 lead into the fourth quarter of a game against Colorado at Memorial Stadium, only to lose 27-12. That was the Buffaloes' last victory against Nebraska, and it was the last time the Cornhuskers lost a conference game at home.

But that was then, when Nebraska didn't have what it has now; a defense for the ages.

On first down, rush end Grant Wistrom crashed through to sack Koy Detmer for a 9-yard loss.

The tackle was one of a game-high 13 (including another sack) credited to

DeAngelo Evans (inset) and fullback Brian Schuster (28) carried the offensive load when Green and Benning went down.



Colorado photos by Jon Waller



Wistrom, who showed why Big 12 coaches had voted him conference Defensive Player of the Year. Other than picking Wistrom, however, the conference coaches missed the mark in voting for postseason awards as far as Nebraska was concerned. Wistrom and tackle Jason Peter were the only Cornhusker defenders named to the All-Big 12 first team, while Colorado and Kansas State each placed three on the first-team defense.

Rover Mike Minter (see overview, page 23), cornerback Michael Booker and tackle Jeff Ogard were second-team defense selections. Rush end Jared Tomich and middle linebacker Jon Hesse were third-team, as was weakside linebacker Terrell Farley, who was dismissed by Osborne for off-the-field problems after the coaches' vote was in. Strongside linebacker Jamel Williams received only honorable mention. To add insult to injury, Williams' name was inadvertently left off the official news release.

The slight by the Big 12 coaches, whether real or imagined, gave Nebraska's defense added, though unnecessary, motivation against Colorado. "I think a lot of people don't have a whole lot of respect for our defense, judging by how they voted," said Nebraska defensive backs coach George Darlington.

Detmer, who completed only 12-of-38 passes for 226 yards, came away with respect for the Cornhusker defense. He was sacked three times and threw two interceptions, both off tipped passes. Middle linebacker Jay Foreman scored Nebraska's first touchdown on a 21-yard return of an interception batted by the 6-foot-6 Ogard near the line of scrimmage. Williams intercepted the second, on a ball deflected by Booker, on a second-and-7 at the Cornhusker 21-yard line.

Colorado had just recovered a fumble, forced when Frost was hit from the blindside, with 7:59 remaining in the game. "Nebraska's defense deserves a lot of credit," Detmer said.

Williams' interception was one of two critical fourth-quarter plays by the defense prior to the Buffaloes' final possession. The other was a tackle for a 13-yard loss by Hesse on a double reverse, which followed a



Offensive miscues didn't prove to be fatal for Nebraska due to the "bacon saving" punting of Jesse Kosch and a Black Shirt secondary which broke up a school-record 17 passes (led by freshman Ralph Brown who had a career best seven).



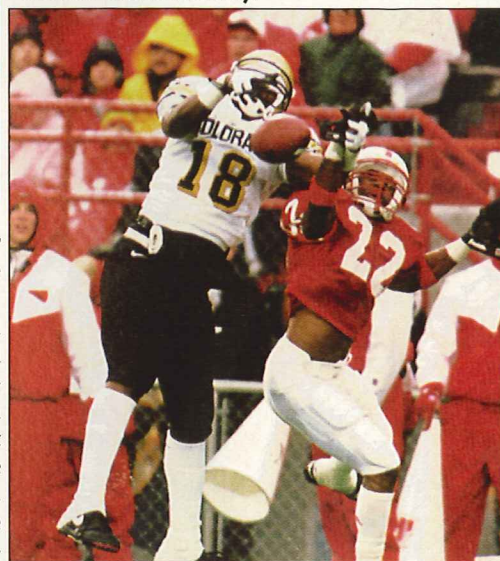
51-yard pass play from Detmer to James Kidd that carried to the Nebraska 28.

Hesse's tackle pushed Colorado back to the 41-yard line so that one play later (a 1-yard loss), a 33-yard pass from Detmer to Phil Savoy only put the Buffaloes at the 9-yard line instead of in the end zone. Then, as they did all afternoon, the Black Shirts shut the door, forcing a school-record tying fourth field goal by Jeremy Aldrich, a sophomore who was kicking for the first time at Colorado.

Aldrich's field goal, with 8:46 remaining, made the score 17-12 and set the stage for the previously mentioned, game-ending drama . . . to which we now return after a lengthy digression.

After Wistrom's sack, a Detmer pass intended for speedy Rae Carruth was broken up by free safety Eric Stokes. Nebraska finished with a school-record 17 pass breakups, nearly twice the previous mark of nine. Freshman cornerback Ralph Brown had seven of the breakups, also a school record.

Colorado faced third-and-19 at its



own 35-yard line, with the clock winding down. With no guarantee he would get another chance, Detmer teamed with Carruth on a 33-yard pass play that kept the Buffaloes' hopes of a 19-17 victory very much alive at the Cornhusker 28-yard line.

Colorado could get no closer, however. On first down, tailback Herchell Troutman was tackled by Wistrom and Peter for a 1-yard loss. Then Detmer attempted three passes, all of which were incomplete to give Nebraska the ball on downs, first-and-10 at its own 29 with 2:53 remaining.

"We were ready to go back out," Hesse said. "We thought we'd prob-

ably have to."

As it turned out, however, Nebraska's defense was done for the day. The offense, which hadn't picked up a first down since the opening series of the second half, picked up three with the running of Frost and fullback Brian Schuster, who carried three times for gains of 3, 13 and 2 yards.

Had freshman DeAngelo Evans gotten injured, Schuster would have been playing I-back at game's end, according to assistant head coach and running backs coach Frank Solich.

Starting I-back Ahman Green went to the sideline after just three carries and stayed there because of a sore left foot, which had begun bothering him after practice two days earlier. Damon Benning, the No. 2 I-back, suffered a severe ankle sprain on the second series of the first quarter and couldn't return. And Jay Sims, the No. 4 I-back, had limped through the week's practices because of a bad ankle.

That left only Evans, and even he wasn't prepared physically to play as much as he did, according to Solich. Evans was recovering from a groin injury and had been unable "to condition (in practice) the way he

should," Solich said. As a result, "he wasn't in great condition. He got tired, worn down."

It didn't appear that way, however. Evans carried 25 times for 123 yards and scored Nebraska's second touchdown, on a 7-yard run with 6:47 remaining in the first half. He also set up the touchdown by running 40 yards to the Colorado 8-yard line, on a third-and-2. Added to Kris Brown's 30-yard field goal early in the second quarter, those points were enough for the victory.

"We've never been in that situation that I can recall," Solich said of having only one I-back healthy enough to play. "We would have had to go with Schuster, which would have been all right."

Evans carried once on the final drive, for a 4-yard gain. But it was Frost who produced big plays for two of the crucial three first downs. He ran for 11 yards on a second-and-7 option and then gained 4 yards when 4 yards were needed to convert on third down, after Colorado had used its last time-out.

Nebraska went back to some option runs on the final possession, after going away from the option following a fumbled pitch near the goal line late in the third quarter. The fumble, which was recovered by guard Chris Dishman at the Cornhusker 4-yard line, "made us a little bit nervous about running the option for a while because of the weather conditions," Osborne said.

"We probably had to run option football to move it on them (the Buffaloes) very well. But I just got spooked out of it a little bit."

The weather was a significant factor on both sides. The game began in a steady drizzle, which changed to rain, sleet, snow and back to drizzle throughout the afternoon. More than once, Cornhusker running backs slipped and fell on the artificial turf, sending up big splashes of water.

It was a day fit for neither man nor beast — particularly Buffaloes. It was, however, fit for Nebraska's defense. "The defensive guys, they love that nasty weather," said senior Jon Vedral, a wingback who has the down-and-dirty mindset of a defensive player. "They played like champions."

Even though Nebraska lost four fumbles, which contributed to the good field position Colorado had much of the game, the Cornhusker defense never allowed a touchdown.

"We feel we're a defense that can dictate tempo," Hesse said. "We feel if you're going to score on us, you're going to have to earn it."

The final drive, however, belonged to the offense.

"We knew how critical that drive was," said Vedral. "We knew we had to buckle down. Panic? Not from my standpoint. It was more like: 'Let's go.'"

It was shades of Norman, Okla., on Thanksgiving Day a quarter of a century before . . . sort of. ■

Feeling slighted by the Big 12 Coaches' voting, Jason Peter (55) and the Black Shirts took out their frustration on Koy Detmer.



OVERVIEW

Secondary Adjustment

To battle passing teams, Nebraska has developed a scheme with Mike Minter lining up at linebacker

By MIKE BABCOCK

Mike Minter got up and around a little earlier than he planned on the Thursday morning following the Iowa State game. A secretary in the Nebraska football offices had called, his wife, Kim, told him. George Darlington, his position coach, wanted him to come in right away for a meeting.

When Minter walked into Darlington's second-floor office, he found teammate Octavious McFarlin watching while Darlington busied himself drawing diagrams on a chalkboard. Darlington told Minter and McFarlin they could sit down, then turned his attention back to the chalkboard. When he had finished the diagrams, he began discussing the responsibilities of the weakside linebacker.

Minter and McFarlin are Nebraska's top two rovers. Or, at least, they were. That morning, a week before the Colorado game, they became weakside linebackers. McFarlin was there to learn what the

weakside linebacker does so he could play it in a pinch. Minter, however, was being asked to switch positions . . . just three games before the end of his Cornhusker career.

Asked? How about told. "I don't think I had a choice," Minter said with a smile.

Early that morning, senior Terrell Farley, the No. 1 weakside linebacker, had been arrested on suspicion of drunken driving, a transgression for which he was subsequently dismissed from the team by coach Tom Osborne. The Cornhuskers needed to shore up the position, quickly. "The best candidates would be rovers," said Minter, a rover, or strong safety, since his first day of practice at Nebraska.

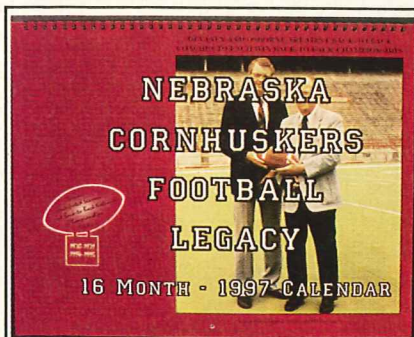
Senior Ryan Terwilliger was ready to step up, as he had the first three games of the season because of a Farley suspension. But Minter played most of the Colorado game at weakside linebacker.

"We just need that speed and coverage ability in there," Osborne said. "Of course, Terwilliger, in some of the base stuff and zone coverages . . . he's fine. But if we had to lock up man-to-man with their receivers, we felt like we needed to have Minter in

Colorado was caught off guard by Minter's (10) switch.



Jon Waller



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there at that linebacker spot.

"It's tough to go from safety to linebacker in one week's time. But he seemed to do well."

Not everyone could have made such a short-notice adjustment. Minter, however, is among the most football-intelligent players on the team, according to Darlington. He could talk defensive strategy with National Football League coaches, Darlington told reporters after the Colorado game.

Jamel Williams, the Cornhuskers' top strongside linebacker, understands as well as anyone what Minter went through during the week before the Colorado game. Like Minter, Williams was a running back and defensive back in high school. But Nebraska saw him as a big-play linebacker.

To the untrained eye, at least, Minter played as if he had been a weakside linebacker all along. He made four tackles and broke up a pass, vaulting over a defender and reaching as high as he could.

At 5-foot-10 and 190 pounds, Minter certainly doesn't look the part of a linebacker. Before the game, he wondered: "How am I going to stand up in the trenches with those big guys?"

The best way, he concluded, was to avoid opposing offensive linemen altogether. "I was telling our front guys, 'Keep those linemen off me,'" Minter said. For the most part, they did.

That Nebraska had the Saturday after the Iowa State game off gave Minter a little more time to adjust. He didn't begin to feel comfortable at his new position for "two or three days," he said.

Outside the team, few people knew of the plan to use Minter at weakside linebacker. It was, for the most part, a well-kept secret until the second play from scrimmage Friday.

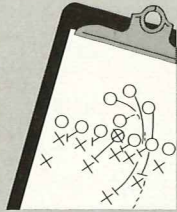
Texas, which advanced to this week's Big 12 playoff game in St. Louis by defeating Texas A&M 51-15 earlier in the day, has a strong passing attack. Longhorns' quarterback James Brown passed for four touchdowns, including two to All-Big 12 wide receiver Michael Adams, in the lopsided victory against their traditional rivals. Plus, Nebraska almost certainly will face a pass-oriented offense in a bowl game. The Cornhuskers will need speed at outside linebacker. And Minter has that.

"Minter probably will go the rest of the way there," said Osborne. ■

STATISTICS VS. COLORADO

NOVEMBER 29, 1996

Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.
Attendance: 75,695



SCORE BY QUARTERS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	Final
NEBRASKA	7	10	0	0	17
COLORADO	6	0	3	3	12

TEAM STATS

	CU	NU
First Downs	14	13
Rushing	4	12
Passing	9	1
Penalty	1	0
Rushing Attempts	32	52
Yards Gained Rushing	94	267
Yards Lost Rushing	42	29
Net yards rushing	51	238
Net yards passing	226	56
Passes attempted	38	14
Passes completed	12	6
Had intercepted	2	0
Total plays	70	66
Total net yards	277	294
Avg. gain per play	4.0	4.5
Fumbles-lost	0-0	5-4
Penalties-yards	9-50	11-70
Punts-yards	7-245	6-275
Avg. per punt	35.0	45.8
Possession time	30:13	29:47

DEFENSIVE LEADERS

NEBRASKA

Player	Solo	Asst	TT	Sacks	Int.
Wistrom	3	10	13	2	0
Hesse	5	4	9	0	0
Williams, J.	2	6	8	1	1
Warfield	6	1	7	0	0
Peter	1	4	5	0	0
Minter	0	4	4	0	0
Brown, R.	2	2	4	0	0
Tomich	1	2	3	0	0
Ogard	1	2	3	0	0
Shaw	2	0	2	0	0
Booker	1	1	2	0	0
Stokes	1	1	2	0	0
Saltsman	0	1	1	0	0
Foreman	0	1	1	0	1
Terwilliger	0	1	1	0	0

COLORADO

Player	Solo	Asst	TT	Sacks	Int.
Rosga	5	6	11	0	0
Navies	3	7	10	0	0
Russell	4	4	8	0	0
Merkerson	2	6	8	0	0
Black	2	6	8	1	0
Simmons	1	6	7	0	0
Olson	0	6	6	0	0
Maumau	2	3	5	0	0

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

RUSHING

NEBRASKA					
Player	Att	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Evans	25	123	4.9	40	1
Schuster	8	51	6.4	21	0
Frost	12	32	2.7	18	0
Benning	2	11	5.5	6	0
Vedral	1	11	11.0	11	0
Green	3	9	3.0	6	0
Makovicka	1	1	1.0	1	0
COLORADO					
Player	Att	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Troutman	27	66	2.4	11	0
Detmer	4	-2	-0.5	18	0
Savoy	1	-13	-13.0	0	0

PASSING

NEBRASKA			
Player	Cmp-Att-Int	Yds	TD
Frost	6-14-0	56	0
COLORADO			
Player	Cmp-Att-Int	Yds	TD
Detmer	12-38-2	226	0

FIELD GOALS

NEBRASKA			
Player	Att	Made	Distance
Brown	2	1	30
COLORADO			
Player	Att	Made	Distance
Aldrich	4	4	45, 40, 38, 27

RECEIVING

NEBRASKA					
Player	Rec	Yds	APC	Lng	TD
Holbein	2	23	11.5	17	0
Brown, L.	1	10	10.0	10	0
Evans	1	9	9.0	9	0
Jackson	1	8	8.0	8	0
Vedral	1	6	6.0	6	0
COLORADO					
Player	Rec	Yds	APC	Lng	TD
Heffner	3	54	18.0	22	0
Kidd	2	59	29.5	51	0
Carruth	2	47	23.5	37	0
Anderson	2	21	10.5	15	0
Savoy	1	33	33.0	33	0

PUNT RETURNS

NEBRASKA					
Player	Att	Yds	Avg	Lng	TD
Fullman	2	26	13.0	16	0
McFarlin	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
COLORADO					
Player	Att	Yds	Avg	Lng	TD
Nunez	4	-4	-1.0	0	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

NEBRASKA					
Player	Att	Yds	Avg	Lng	TD
Wiggins	3	61	20.3	24	0
Evans	2	35	17.5	22	0
COLORADO					
Player	Att	Yds	Avg	Lng	TD
Nunez	1	24	24.0	24	0

1996 SEASON STATS

(11 GAMES)

RUSHING

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	Tds.
Green, A.	10	155	917	91.7	7
Evans, D.	10	116	646	64.6	11
Benning, D.	10	85	465	46.5	7
Frost, S.	11	108	391	35.5	9
Sims, J.	8	36	256	32.0	3
Shuster, B.	10	40	184	18.4	1
Turman, M.	9	21	122	13.5	3
Makovicka, J.	9	21	114	12.6	0
Perino, J.	5	5	51	12.8	0
Cobb, J.	6	12	43	7.0	1
Christo, M.	4	3	35	8.8	0
Eicher, C.	2	2	18	9.0	0
Kingston, B.	5	9	10	2.5	0
Olmes, J.	2	3	8	4.0	0
Legate, B.	5	3	8	1.6	0
Wiggins, S.	9	2	7	0.7	0
London, F.	3	3	6	3.0	0
Cheatham, K.	7	1	-16	-2.3	0

PASSING

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	Tds.
Frost, S.	11	89-176-3	50.6	1,285	13
Turman, M.	9	9-19-0	47.4	126	1
Perino, J.	4	0-2-0	0.0	0	0

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPG	Tds.
Holbein, B.	11	20	292	14.6	26.5	4
Vedral, J.	11	17	265	15.6	24.1	1
Jackson, V.	10	13	220	16.9	20.2	4
Green, A.	10	9	93	10.3	9.3	0
Cheatham, K.	7	6	94	15.6	13.4	1
Evans, D.	10	6	33	5.5	3.3	0
Brown, L.	6	5	101	20.2	16.8	1
Lake, J.	6	4	101	25.3	16.8	1
Jackson, S.	6	4	48	12.0	8.0	2
Shuster, B.	10	3	74	24.6	7.4	0
Makovicka, J.	9	3	28	3.0	3.1	0
Wiggins, S.	9	2	30	15.0	3.3	0
Wills, A.	3	1	19	19.0	6.3	0
Edwards, J.R.	3	1	10	10.0	5.0	0
Legate, B.	5	1	9	9.0	1.8	0
Wieling, S.	3	1	6	6.0	2.0	0
Benning, D.	10	1	-1	-1.0	-0.1	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, K.	11	17	10	50

DEFENSE

Name	G	UT	AT	TT	Int.	Sacks
Williams, J.	11	30	55	85	3	5
Hesse, J.	11	31	49	80	0	2
Wistrom, G.	11	26	43	69	1	9.5
Peter, J.	11	16	39	55	0	4
Farley, T.	8	15	28	43	0	3
Foreman, J.	11	10	33	43	2	0.5
Minter, M.	11	11	31	42	5	0
Tomich, J.	11	14	24	38	0	5
Stokes, E.	11	15	22	37	0	0
Warfield, E.	11	14	19	33	2	0
Ogard, J.	10	10	22	32	0	1
Rucker, M.	10	15	15	30	0	7
Booker, M.	10	8	17	25	1	0
Brown, R.	11	12	12	24	4	0
McFarlin, O.	11	5	19	24	0	0
Kelsay, C.	10	9	13	22	0	2.5
Wiltz, J.	11	5	15	20	0	1
Terwilliger, R.	10	5	15	20	0	1
Shaw, B.	10	9	11	20	0	1.5
Toline, T.	8	6	9	15	0	0
List, G.	8	10	3	13	1	0
Jackson, J.	7	3	10	13	1	0.5
Johnson, E.	8	2	10	12	0	0
Brown, M.	10	8	4	12	1	0
Saltsman, S.	9	0	12	12	0	0
Fullman, M.	9	7	4	11	0	0
Ortiz, T.	7	3	7	10	0	1
Walther, E.	5	4	4	8	0	0
Peterson, J.	7	3	3	6	0	0
Warren, S.	6	2	4	6	0	0.5
Allen, D.	4	3	2	5	0	2

TEAM STATISTICS

Total Offensive Yards	4,671	2,562			
Net Rushing Yards	3,260	856			
Passing Yards	1,411	1,706			
Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOT
NU	75	159	160	91	485
Opponents	22	27	17	50	116

1996 NEBRASKA FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Record (Conference)	— 10-1 (8-0)
Sept. 7	Michigan State W, 55-14
Sept. 21	@ Arizona State L, 19-0
Sept. 28	Colorado State W, 65-9
Oct. 5	@ Kansas State W, 39-3
Oct. 12	Baylor W, 49-0
Oct. 19	@ Texas Tech W, 24-10
Oct. 26	Kansas W, 63-7
Nov. 2	@ Oklahoma W, 73-21
Nov. 9	Missouri W, 51-7
Nov. 16	@ Iowa State W, 49-14
Nov. 29	Colorado W, 17-12



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AFTER THE GAME

Adjusting to the post-football aspect of life won't be tough for Mike Minter after the lessons he has learned at Nebraska

When Mike Minter arrived at Nebraska as a scholarship recruit in the fall of 1992, his goals were similar to those of just about everyone else, including walk-ons. The best-case scenario would be to earn All-American honors and leave as a first-round National Football League draft pick.

He could settle for a little less and still be satisfied, he thought. But not too much less.

Few athletes achieve the success Minter expected. You don't have to major in actuarial science to realize the odds are heavy against you. But when you're 18 years old and accustomed to athletic success, it's easy to consider yourself the exception, no matter what the laws of probability indicate.

Exceptional athletes at age 18, which he certainly was, "don't understand the odds are stacked against us," Minter said recently. "It's amazing how you can get swept up in all of that."

The first day of practice as a freshman offers some indication of the challenge to be faced, "when you see about 15 players as good as you are at your position," he said, exaggerating only slightly.

And when you return to your dorm room after practice each day during your redshirt season, you begin to wonder if maybe the goals you brought from high

school should be amended just a little.

Minter remembers sitting in his dorm room as a red-shirt and weighing the merits of transferring. "Man, I'm not playing," he would tell himself daily. "I could go somewhere else and play right now."

Without encouragement from Will Shields, Minter might have acted on such an ill-advised plan. Shields, like Minter, was from Lawton, Okla., and had struggled with similar emotions four years before. He stuck it out, however, and achieved the success most could only imagine.

Shields was a three-year starter. He was a consensus All-American. He received the Outland Trophy as the nation's best collegiate lineman. And he left Nebraska as a third-round NFL draft pick.

"I've got to thank Will Shields. He was easy to talk to," said Minter.

As a co-captain, Minter has tried to be accessible to teammates struggling with emotions similar to those that once threatened to send him packing for home.

"I hear the same things I said from younger guys now," he said. "If they have something to talk about, they can come and talk to me."

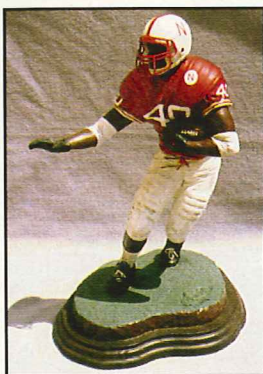
"A lot of the guys kid me and call me 'Old Man.' You do get to feeling old at times. I couldn't do another year here."

by mike babcock

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Minter is among 24 seniors who are completing their Cornhusker careers. Twenty of them, including Minter, have been at Nebraska for five years, and all but one of the 20 redshirted as freshmen.

Unlike the others, Jared Tomich couldn't practice in 1992 because of NCAA freshman eligibility requirements. Mike Fullman transferred from Rutgers University in 1994. Terrell Farley transferred from Independence, Kan., Junior College in 1995. Michael Booker and Jamel Williams arrived in 1993. As was the case with Tomich, they had to sit out an entire year before becoming eligible.

The senior class includes 13 players who walked on. Only eight of the 22 scholarship recruits from 1992 remain. Four others in that recruiting class completed their eligibility prior to this season: Tommie Frazier, Clinton Childs and junior college transfers Kareem Moss and Toby Wright.

Two other 1992 scholarship recruits came from Oklahoma: Willis Brown (Edmond) and Ben Rutz (Oklahoma City). Brown's career was ended by injury. Rutz was a senior at Kansas this season.

Minter had to sit out not only as a freshman redshirt but also most of his sophomore season, after suffering a serious knee injury in the second game at Texas Tech. The redshirt and then the injury made the early years go slowly. "It used to be: 'Am I ever going to get out of here,'" Minter said. Now, "it's amazing how fast the time has gone. It seems like just the other day I was a redshirt."

Much has changed in the five years since Minter left Lawton with dreams of being an All-American. "When I went home last summer, all my family said: 'Chris (his middle name), man, you're different. You're not the same person who left here.' I can't really see it, but they can," he said.

His way of looking at the world is different. His attitudes have been shaped by several events, including the knee injury and the long road to rehabilitation, which extended through last season.

After the Washington State game a year ago, Cornhusker defensive coordinator Charlie McBride went so far as to suggest Minter's effectiveness had diminished to the point that he might be finished playing. In addition, Minter came out of last spring as the No. 2 rover behind Octavious McFarlin.

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His determination to succeed in football was unabated. But his attitude toward it changed dramatically as a result of a shift in focus in his personal life. Minter met and married his wife Kim after he got to Nebraska. The couple had their first child a year and a half ago: Michael Minter Jr.

"After I had a son, it was like 360 degrees from football being first to being almost last. You look at life a whole different way. It's just amazing," said Minter. "You have to raise a kid in society, and you go from trying to become the best football player to trying to become the best father.

"Being a father is tougher, big time. You're learning every day. Football, I always had that in me, what to do and how to do it. But being a father . . . you're never going to master the father business."

The responsibility inherent in being a parent makes it a much greater task, assuming, of course, the parent understands and accepts the responsibility. That can be extremely difficult, especially for someone trying to meet the demands of major college athletics. Personal concerns must be set aside.

Some aren't ready to do that. "A lot of people think: 'As long as it doesn't hinder what I'm doing with football, it's OK,'" Minter said. A child can be regarded as a hindrance rather than a blessing.

Minter's attitude about that is unequivocal. "Having a child is the greatest thing on earth. Football can't come close," he said. "The love I have for my son will always be there. Football won't."

About the time his son was born, Minter also underwent a religious awakening. The knee injury and the insight it gave him into the transitory nature of athletic success also contributed to the awakening. Mostly, however, it was the birth of Michael Jr. "I understood that was the only way I could become a great father," said Minter. "Having God in my life made that focus . . . but it wasn't natural, believe me. I came here to have fun. I thought: 'When I finish, then I can get married, have a family, start going to church.'"

As it turns out, those things have given him substantial joy, which he'll be able to take with him when he leaves Nebraska, and eventually football. His sense of self-worth no

1996 SENIORS

David Alderman	CB	Omaha, Neb.
*Damon Benning	IB	Omaha, Neb.
Chad Blahak	CB	Lincoln, Neb.
Michael Booker	CB	Oceanside, Neb.
*Chris Dishman	OG	Cozad, Neb.
Terrell Farley	LB	Columbus, Ga.
Mike Fullman	CB	Roselle, N.J.
Jon Hesse	LB	Lincoln, Neb.
Brendan Holbein	SE	Cozad, Neb.
Kory Mikos	OT	Seward, Neb.
Bryce Miller	RE	Elmwood, Neb.
*Mike Minter	RV	Lawton, Okla.
Jeff Ogard	DT	St. Paul, Neb.
Mike Roberts	RV	Omaha, Neb.
Scott Saltsman	DT	Wichita Falls, Texas
Brian Schuster	FB	Fullerton, Neb.
Eric Stokes	CB	Lincoln, Neb.
Ryan Terwilliger	LB	Grant, Neb.
*Jared Tomich	RE	St. John, Ind.
Adam Treu	OT	Lincoln, Neb.
Matt Turman	QB	Wahoo, Neb.
Jon Vedral	WB	Gregory, S.D.
Matt Vrzal	OG	Grand Island, Neb.
Jamel Williams	LB	Merrillville, Ind.
*Captain		

longer depends on that.

Many athletes have difficulty adjusting once their playing careers have ended. They can't walk away from the football field without losing their identity. "This is not everything," Minter said.

"A lot of players get caught up in it and never want it to end. But what are you going to do when it does? Where is your future? Before I accepted Christ, I wouldn't have wanted football to end, either."

Minter is no less competitive than when he arrived at Nebraska five years ago. His senior season has been his best, in fact. He has been a

The tragic death of Brook Berringer was a harsh reminder of the fragileness of life according to Mike Minter (10).

stabilizing influence in the secondary. And he has contributed significantly to the most offensive defense during Tom Osborne's 24 seasons as head coach.

The difference is, Minter now has a perspective on life that transcends his 22 years.

He is neither smug nor complacent, however. The tragic death of Brook Berringer last April was a harsh reminder of the fragileness of life. Berringer's death affected him deeply, said Minter. "I was on fire. I thought nothing could stop me. You start to get complacent, thinking: 'I'm cool.'"

"But you don't know when your time will come. So how can you become complacent? In football, you've got a schedule, a routine. Everything is laid out. You don't have that with your life."

During the fourth quarter of the Cornhuskers' next-to-last home game against Missouri, Minter and Eric Stokes, another fifth-year senior and defensive back who has endured his own considerable hardships in order to be successful, stood on the west sideline together and talked about how quickly the time at Nebraska had passed and how the Colorado game would be their last at Memorial Stadium.

"Every guy who comes here thinks if he can be an All-American, he'll be happy. Then things don't work out . . . people fall by the wayside," said Minter. "That's why Christ plays such a big role in my life."

He looks back now and sees his immaturity that first fall at Nebraska. Much has happened since then. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think it would have ended up like this," he said. ■



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1997 Class Takes Shape

*Husker verbals grow to 10 with addition
of offensive lineman Steve Alstadt*

Nebraska's way of recruiting is also becoming the way of the 1990s — get a verbal commitment from every great player in-state before December and offer scholarships to the top players in the nation based on the team's needs at each position. The goal is to have at least half the class committed before December and then at least two-thirds by January.

The Huskers have been very successful at this procedure under the direction of associate athletic director and head of football operations Steve Pederson.

Pederson has turned it up a notch at Nebraska, leading the Huskers to two straight top-five classes. Pederson's Tennessee class of 1994 was ranked No. 1 by most recruiting publications.

Nebraska will miss Pederson's leadership when he accepts the athletic director post at the University of Pittsburgh on Dec. 1, 1996.

However, the recruiting program Pederson designed is firmly in place and the Huskers are rolling on.

Heading into December, the Huskers have 10 commitments in the books with the latest coming from offensive lineman Steve Alstadt (6-5, 255, 5.2) of Fort Calhoun, Neb.

Alstadt had originally given a verbal commitment to Kansas State after attending the Wildcat summer camp.

"Nebraska was the school I really wanted to go to all along," Alstadt said. "When Kansas State offered back in the summer, I wasn't sure what Nebraska's thoughts were

about me. When they stayed in contact and finally offered I knew I had to follow my heart and go where I have always wanted to go.

"I have always wanted to play at Nebraska, but it was tough to tell Kansas State, 'no.' They have been very nice to me and I am sure they are not real happy with me right now. But right now, I have to worry about myself and Nebraska is the school for me."

Alstadt is the third offensive lineman to come from within the state. **David Volke** (6-5, 260, 4.8) of Battle Creek and **Kyle Kollmorgen** (6-4, 267, 5.2) of Lincoln (Southeast) committed earlier. Kollmorgen one

of the first players to whom the Huskers offered a scholarship.

Nebraska also got a very early jump on their quarterback needs.

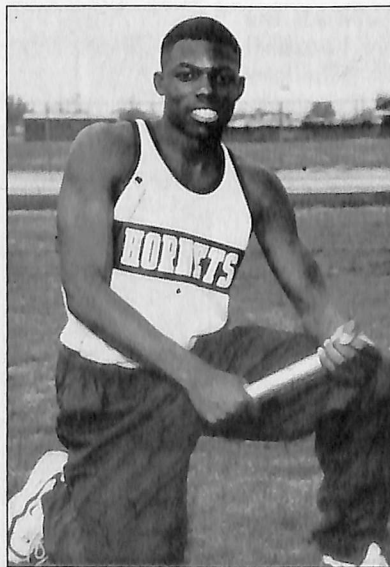
Eric Crouch (6-0, 185, 4.5) of Omaha (Millard North), Neb., is regarded by most as the top run/pass quarterback in the country. Crouch capped off a brilliant career with nearly 1,300 yards rushing, 600 passing and 20 touchdowns (15 rushing) during his senior season.

Bobby Newcombe (6-0, 185, 4.5) of Albuquerque (Highland), N.M., is rated right at the top of recruiters' lists with Crouch. Newcombe hit on 41-of-72 passes this past season for 735 yards, 13 touchdowns and one interception, while rushing for 751 yards (8.9 yards per carry) and nine scores.

At receiver, the Huskers will likely sign **Matt Davison** (6-2, 170, 4.5) of Tecumseh, Neb.



**By
JAMES
HALE**



Bobby Newcombe's decision to commit early so that he could concentrate on his senior season paid off.

RECRUITING

Kyle Vanden Bosch can play inside or outside linebacker, but will probably end up at rush end at Nebraska.

Davison closed out a brilliant career with 63 catches for 1,314 yards and 20 touchdowns.

Irwin Swinney (6-0, 180, 4.42) of Lincoln (Southeast) is considered one of the best athletes in the country, and easily could fit into the receiver category. He also could play in the secondary, as well, especially at the soon-to-be vacant safety positions.

The interesting thing about Swinney is that he has played only one year of organized football. He had a really good summer camp, and Nebraska was impressed with his raw talent and ability.

The Cornhuskers have cleaned up at linebacker with their early commitments.

Kyle Vanden Bosch (6-4, 235, 4.55) of Inwood (W. Lyon), Iowa, is rated by most as the top linebacker prospect in the country. Vanden Bosch can play inside or out, but probably will fill the outside pass rushing role that the Huskers have made famous.

James Burrows (6-3, 230, 4.8) of Ames, Iowa, has played his way into top national linebacker status. A great inside linebacker prospect, Burrows is a solid hitter and is rated right behind Vanden Bosch in Iowa.

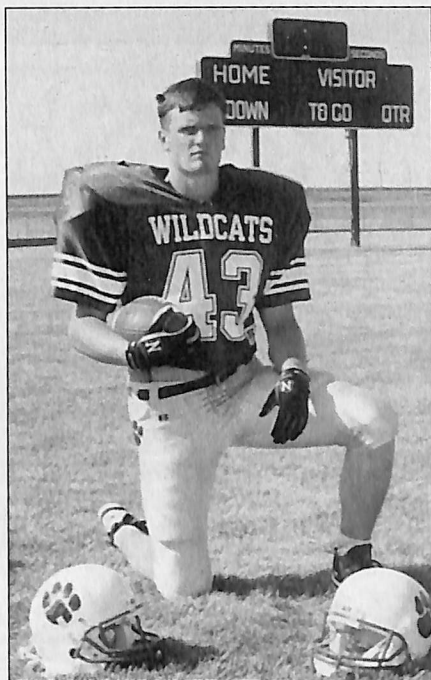
Burrows, who was offered a scholarship by Kansas State and Iowa State (as a tight end), had some allegiance to Nebraska before the season because his father played for the school.

Mark Vedral (6-1, 200, 4.7) out of Gregory, S.D., will be the latest Vedral brother to play for the Big Red. An all-conference player and team MVP, Vedral plays both running back and linebacker. He chose Nebraska over Iowa, Minnesota and Wyoming.

A key priority for the Huskers is reloading in the secondary.

Three of the four starters in the secondary will be lost due to graduation. At press time, the Huskers still led on cornerback **Dion Booker** (6-2, 185, 4.5) of Oceanside (El Camino), Calif. The Huskers own a slight lead over Texas, Colorado, Washington State and California. The Huskers figure to have an advantage with Dion's older brother, Michael, being one of the graduating seniors.

Marlon Guess (5-10, 165, 4.5) of Ponca City, Okla., is rated as one of the nation's top 150 defensive backs.



Guess said Nebraska, Texas A&M and Notre Dame are his top three, with Penn State and Iowa getting his final two visits.

The Huskers also lead on one of the top safety prospects in the country. **Larry Hollinquest** (6-1, 175, 4.5) of Houston (Sam Houston), Texas, is the best in the state, and has Nebraska out in front of Colorado, Arkansas, Texas A&M and Texas. Hollinquest also is being scouted as a wide receiver and running back.

Derrick Gibson (6-2, 195, 4.55) of Miami (Killian), Fla., is the best safety prospect in Florida. It will be tough to beat Florida State and Notre Dame, but the Huskers have earned a visit, as have Tennessee and Auburn.

John Norman (6-2, 190, 4.55) of Midland (Lee), Texas, is rated by many as the best defensive back in the country. Norman has said Nebraska is very much in the hunt, along with Michigan, Colorado, Texas, Texas Tech and USC.

The Huskers also have jumped into the lead for one of the nation's top noseguard prospects in **Robert**

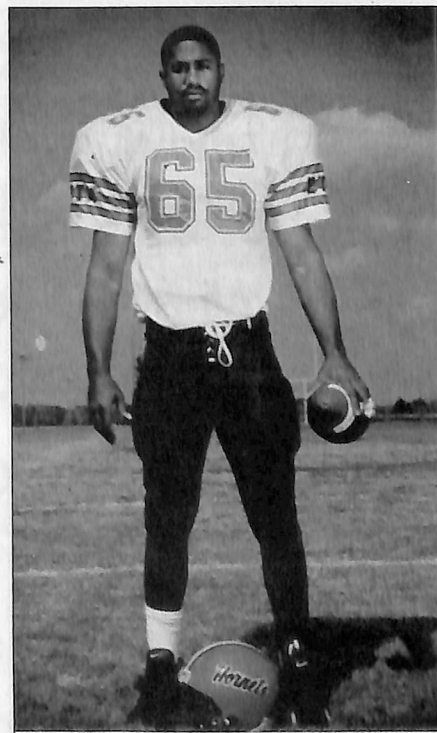
Bernard (6-3, 255, 4.8) of Baytown (Sterling), Texas. Bernard is highly-coveted because of his lateral speed. He could use some weight training, but has the raw ability to play right away.

Nebraska leads Texas, Texas A&M, Florida and Florida State.

Nationally-ranked defensive end **Darryl "Rocky" Bright** (6-5, 240, 4.6) of Tulsa (Booker T. Washington) has set a visit with Nebraska on Jan. 17. He also will visit Oklahoma, Notre Dame (Dec. 13), Texas A&M (Jan. 10) and Michigan (Jan. 24).

Nebraska has 18 scholarships to give and with the 10 already committed, the Huskers are on their way to no worse than a top 10 recruiting class. If they fill their needs in the secondary and along the defensive line, then this class jumps into the top five. ■

Darryl "Rocky" Bright, one of the top defensive ends in the country, has set a visit with Nebraska for Jan. 17.



VERBALS TO DATE

PLAYER	POS	HT	WT	SP	HOMETOWN (SCHOOL)
Steve Alstadt	OL	6-5	255	5.2	Fort Calhoun, Neb.
James Burrows	LB	6-3	230	4.8	Ames, Iowa
Eric Crouch	QB	6-0	185	4.5	Omaha (Millard North), Neb.
Matt Davison	WR	6-2	170	4.5	Tecumseh, Neb.
Kyle Kollmorgen	OL	6-4	267	5.2	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.
Bobby Newcombe	QB	6-0	185	4.5	Albuquerque (Highland), N.M.
Irwin Swinney	WR	6-0	180	4.4	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.
Kyle Vanden Bosch	LB	6-4	235	4.5	Inwood (West Lyon), Iowa
Mark Vedral	LB	6-1	200	4.7	Gregory, S.D.
David Volke	OL	6-5	260	4.8	Battle Creek, Neb.

LONE STARS

The state of Texas has long been a hotbed for high school football and a perfect recruiting ground for the Huskers

Almost from the time his family moved to Wichita Falls, Texas, from Flint, Mich., Scott Saltsman can remember the lights from the high school football stadium shining through the window of his room on Friday nights in the fall. The stadium sits across the street from the Saltsman home, on what was once the edge of Wichita Falls, a community of 100,000 on Highway 281 near the Oklahoma border.

The land surrounding Wichita Falls is populated with cattle, raised for beef, and it is dotted by little more than mesquite brush. It is so flat that on football Friday nights "you can see the lights (of the stadium) from 30 or 40 miles away," said Saltsman, Nebraska's senior defensive tackle.

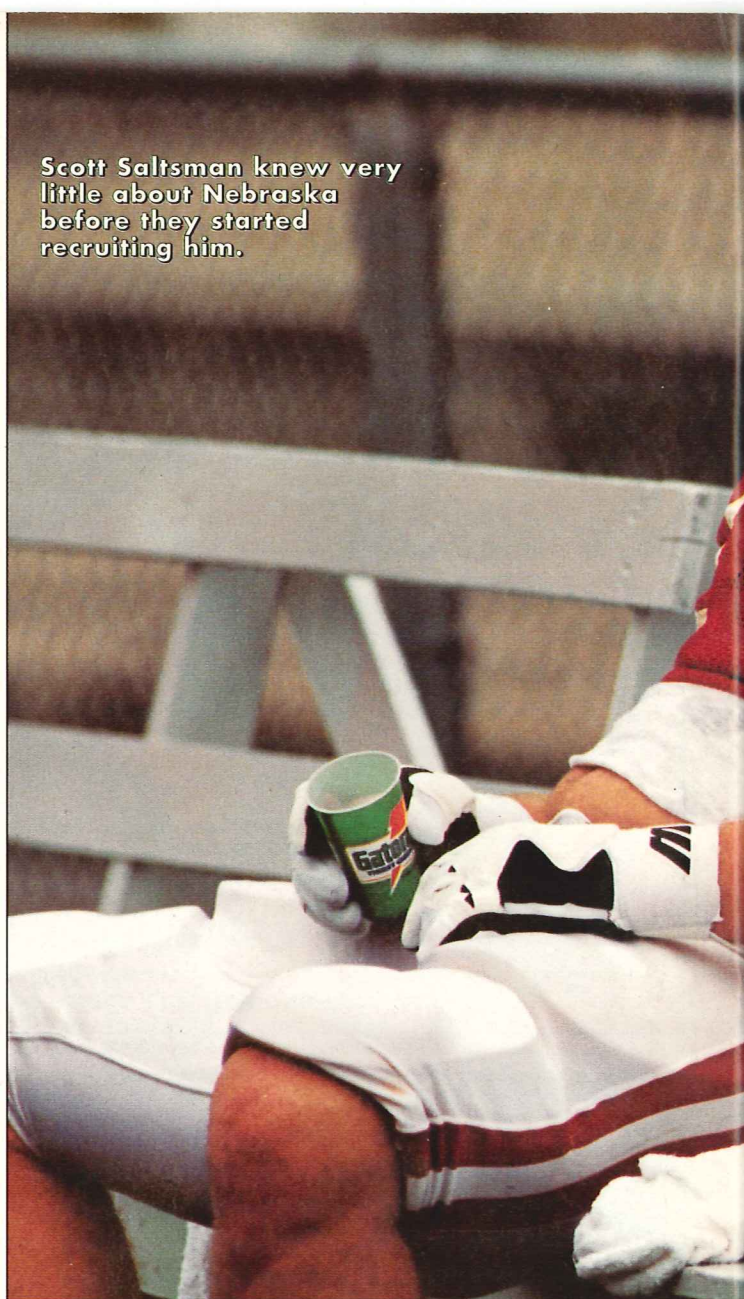
The stadium holds more than 20,000 and is almost always filled. It has an artificial turf field. It would make some universities proud. When Saltsman was a Cornhusker redshirt, he took a friend home for a visit. As they approached Wichita Falls, his friend asked: "What's that in the distance?"

"Wait 'til we get there," Saltsman replied.

The closer they got, the better their view of the stadium. Saltsman's friend wanted to know if it were a college field. "He couldn't believe it," Saltsman said recently. "My buddy was in awe. Hey, that's what high school football is like in Texas. It's been that way for as long as I can remember."

Texas has more than 260,000 square miles and nearly 19 million people. It is both vast and populous. The state takes pride in its size and in doing things in a big way. High school football is no exception. "I think it's taken a lot more seriously by the community," said Saltsman. "Guys play just as hard here (in Nebraska). But the

Scott Saltsman knew very little about Nebraska before they started recruiting him.



emphasis is greater."

High school teams play as many as 10 regular-season games, according to Saltsman. "If you're a state champion, you have to win 16 or 17 games. They play through the middle of December."

Even though the passion for football in Texas is fairly universal, that played by high schools holds a special place. For example, if Texas and Texas A&M were to play each other on a Friday night, "I can't say for sure, but people might go watch a high school game instead," said Saltsman. If college teams other than Texas and Texas A&M were playing on a Friday night, he wouldn't have any doubt.

Saltsman, the Black Shirts' third defensive tackle, is among six Texans who have contributed to Nebraska's success this season. Junior Aaron Taylor, also from Saltsman's high school in Wichita Falls (they were teammates), is the starting center. Junior Octavious McFarlin, from Bastrop, is the No. 2 rover. Junior Mike Van Cleave, from Huffman, is the No. 3 offensive right guard. Sophomore Kris Brown, from Southlake, is the No. 1 place-kicker. And redshirted freshman Julius Jackson, from Gainesville, is the No. 3 middle linebacker. Freshman redshirts Justin Ferrell and Clint Finley also are



from Texas. Ferrell, an offensive lineman, is from McAllen. Finley, a quarterback turned a safety, is from Cuero.

The Cornhuskers have consistently recruited Texas under Tom Osborne. Nearly four dozen Texans have earned letters during Osborne's 24 seasons, beginning with Tom Sorley, Kelvin Clark, Rick Berns and Keith Bishop in 1976. All were members of Osborne's 1974 recruiting class.

Sorley, a captain in 1978, was a quarterback from Big Spring. Clark was a consensus All-American offensive tackle from Odessa. He is now the strength coach at Texas Tech. Berns was an I-back from Wichita Falls. And Bishop, who transferred to Baylor, was a center from Midland.

"We've always been interested in Texas players," said Osborne. A check of Nebraska media guides shows that only five Texans earned letters during Bob Devaney's 11 seasons as head coach, and two of those — Rudy Johnson and Willie Paschall — were recruited by Devaney's predecessor, Bill Jennings. Johnson, from Aransas Pass, and Paschall, from San Antonio, were both halfbacks.

The other Texas lettermen under Devaney were quarterback Ernie Sigler (1967-68) from Dallas, center Doug

Jamail (1970-71) from Bellaire and defensive tackle Dan Malone (1970) from Longview.

"At one time, Texas players just stayed in Texas. It was pretty hard to get the good (high school) players out of Texas," Osborne said. "It runs in cycles. We like to get two or three a year from Texas."

The adjustment from parts of Texas to Nebraska isn't as difficult as it might seem. "For the most part, it's not too far away, and northern and west Texas, Lubbock and Amarillo, are a lot like here. I've always felt west Texas, geographically as well as the people, was similar to Nebraska," Osborne said.

That's true, to some extent, according to Saltsman. "We'll get wind chills in the 20's (in Wichita Falls) in late January and occasionally snow, maybe a half-inch. But during the football season, it's hot. It might be 95 degrees at night in September," he said. "I remember playing a game in Amarillo when it was 25 degrees, though. I had never been that cold in my life . . . I'm not kidding."

Amarillo is 225 miles to the west, in the Panhandle. So that one experience didn't prepare him for the worst winter weather in Nebraska. "The first time it snowed two feet here, I couldn't believe it. I had to call home," said Saltsman. "You get that 40-below wind-chill, it's a shock."

Osborne had a direct connection to Texas on his first staff in Jerry Moore, who coached the quarterbacks and wide receivers. Moore was from Bonham, Texas, and played at Baylor. He also coached at Corsicana, Texas, High and spent eight years as an assistant at Southern Methodist.

Lance Van Zandt joined Osborne's staff as defensive coordinator in 1977 and brought contacts established during 10 years as a coach at the high school and college levels in Texas.

Though such backgrounds aren't essential in recruiting an area, they can be helpful. Current Cornhusker assistants Turner Gill and Craig Bohl both have direct links to Texas. Gill was recruited by Van Zandt out of Arlington High School in Fort Worth, and he coached at North Texas and Southern Methodist before returning to Nebraska. Bohl was the defensive coordinator at Rice from 1989-93.

Tony Samuel and Milt Tenopir also make regular recruiting trips to Texas. Tenopir, who spends most of his time in west Texas, recruited Saltsman. The day after Tenopir called to schedule a recruiting visit, Saltsman went to first-period economics class at Rider High School and asked if anyone knew where Lincoln, Neb., was. No one did, so the instructor pulled down a U.S. map.

Saltsman accepted Nebraska's scholarship offer mostly because of its tradition of success and its annual bowl game appearances. He was impressed by what he saw on the recruiting trip to Lincoln. And he was aware that Rick Berns, who returned to Wichita Falls to live, once played for Nebraska.

The competition at Nebraska is at a significantly higher level. Players are bigger, stronger and faster. But the numbers aren't much greater than they were at Rider, the largest of three high schools in Wichita Falls. Rider High competes in the small schools division of Class 5-A, the state's largest classification. There is also a large-schools Class 5-A. Wichita Falls High and Hershey High are Class 4-A.

At Rider High, "we had 130 to 140 come out for the team," Saltsman said. Not everyone made the team, however, because "the school couldn't afford to feed them all on road trips." ■

Consider the football lives of Iowa State tailback Troy Davis and Texas Tech I-back Byron Hanspard. An opposing defense knows they're going to get the ball. Davis and Hanspard are the focus of defensive strategy. And opponents put 100-percent effort into stopping the two talented running backs.

"Lisa's role for us is kind of like the halfback's role

Want to know what that feels like? Just ask Nebraska volleyball player Lisa Reitsma.

"Lisa's role for us is kind of like the halfback's role for Iowa State, except she plays for a better team," Husker volleyball coach Terry Pettit said recently. "When teams prepare to play us, I'm sure they prepare to stop her. I'm sure everybody spends most of their time digging right-side attack.

"She has to be up to that task every time we go out to play."

Reitsma, a 6-foot-4 outside hitter, has taken on a role for Nebraska this season that was played by the likes of Allison Weston, Kelly Aspegren and Stephanie Thater in the past. The junior from Sanborn, Iowa, is the go-to player the Huskers need to get their points. As Reitsma goes, so goes Nebraska.

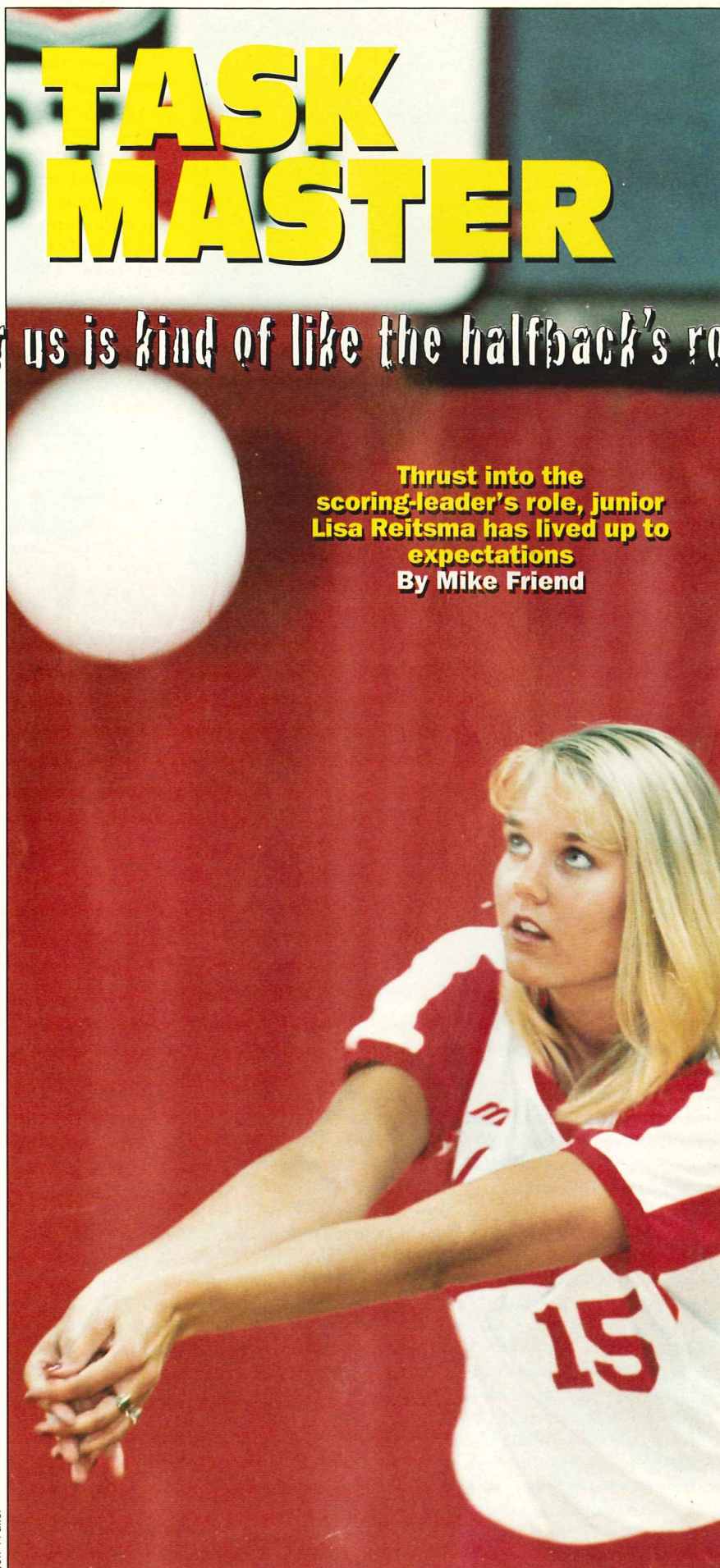
"It's difficult to go from a team where you were the third option to the very first in all instances," Pettit said. "Reitsma knows if she doesn't go out and get the kills, we don't win. There will come a point in time when she will enjoy that role. Right now, I think she just does it . . . and she does it pretty well."

Reitsma's numbers support Pettit's claim. She has led the Huskers in attacks and has nearly doubled the production of any other individual on the team in total kills, all while being on the floor as much or more than any other Husker. She has tallied over 400 kills for the second season in a row and collected over 1,200 attack attempts. She was thrust into the scoring-leader's role, and she can't ignore it.

She wouldn't think of shirking the responsibility, of backing off

TASK MASTER

Thrust into the scoring-leader's role, junior Lisa Reitsma has lived up to expectations
By Mike Friend



SIDE OUT

Jon Waller

even a little. "There is a little more pressure associated with it, but I like it," said Reitsma. "I like big games, and I like the fact I have to produce results. I had that feeling a little bit last year, too. It comes with the job."

It isn't as if Reitsma just discovered the game this season. She already had some credentials that had to concern opponents. In 1995, she finished with 869 attacks and 432 kills, with a 4.08 kill-per-game aver-

even though the Huskers were once again solid in nearly every facet of the game in 1996, it was fairly clear that Reitsma's numbers would have to pick up considerably in order for Nebraska to continue to be successful.

Pettit sat down with Reitsma on several occasions and discussed what the team expected from her. It didn't entail becoming another Weston. It simply required her to

ly when the questions pertain to her ability to improve as a player.

"Overall, I believe that my game has gotten better than it was last year," she said. "But I truly believe I can become a better offensive player. I have to say that I want to accomplish a lot more offensively, things that I haven't been able to accomplish in the past. I want to become a better hitter from the middle to the outside, and I want to hit over a

for Iowa State, except she plays for a better team."

age. She was picked as an American Volleyball Coaches Association All-American.

Few have been surprised. "She moved us from a team that lost three starters into a team competing in the top five. I'm not sure what else you can do if you're in her shoes," Pettit said.

Reitsma pounded out her solid numbers behind the even more impressive numbers of Weston, who also earned All-America honors. Weston left a legacy that Reitsma, or any other Husker, would be hard-pressed to repeat. But Weston had All-America caliber help, too. And

take on Weston's role.

"We've had one-on-one meetings, and he (Pettit) told me all the way back to last spring what he expected," Reitsma said. "There has never been any doubt about what he wanted me to accomplish. Things were different this year with the Big 12, and the challenges were going to be different."

Reitsma, a psychology major who wants to pursue a career as a high school counselor or work in sports psychology, was selected to the Phillips 66 Academic All-Big Eight team last season. She tends to answer questions carefully, especial-

block more effectively. I want to be the best player I can be."

Because of such an attitude, Reitsma knows the season presented a challenge greater than last season's. The Huskers didn't blitz opponents, hammering out three-set wins. They struggled in losses at Hawaii and Texas Tech and played several contests that took four or five games to decide.

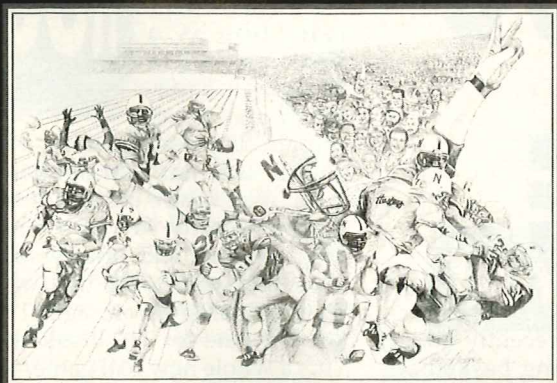
"It's been the most challenging season I've had here," Reitsma said.

"I'll keep experiences like this in mind, and hopefully, I'll be able to help other people with what I've learned." ■

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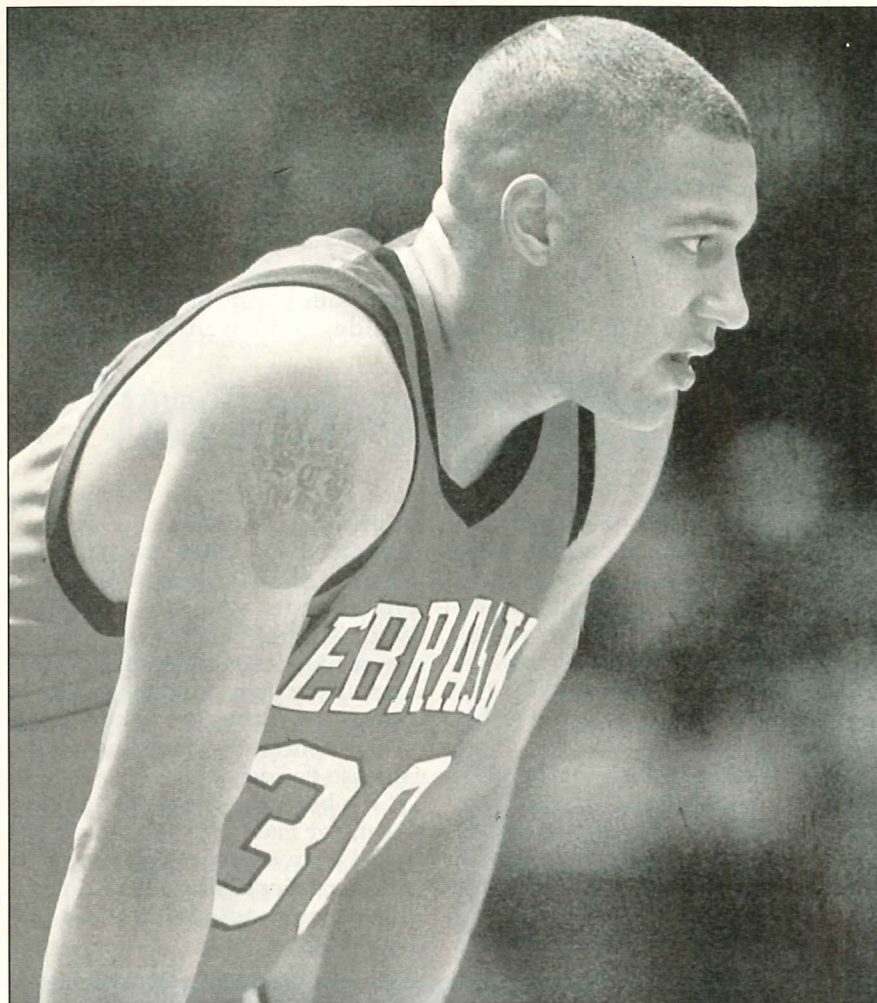
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Corby D. Roberts

ONE TOUGH COOKIE

Freshman Cookie Belcher has shown maturity in making immediate impact

Cookie Belcher was talking to a writer in the hallway outside the media room at the Bob Devaney Sports Center when coach Danny Nee stopped to look at Belcher's new tattoo.

"Has your mom seen that?" Nee asked. Belcher smiled. "Not yet," he said.

Nee continued down the hall toward his office. "Don't get any more," he said as he turned a corner. His words were more of a request than an order, as if he were asking a

favor from a friend.

Belcher had only recently gotten the tattoo of a flaming basketball, similar to the one on the cover of this season's Cornhusker media guide. The cover provided the pattern, in fact.

"I showed the guy the picture, and he just kind of worked with me. He told me he couldn't do it exactly," said Belcher, who was accompanied to Ralph's Hungry Eye Tattoo parlor in downtown Lincoln by Carlos Polk, a redshirt freshman linebacker on the Nebraska football team from Rockford, Ill. Polk had

gotten a tattoo the previous day. Belcher spent about 45 minutes getting his, on his right shoulder.

"It wasn't too bad," he said. "I had gotten one before, so I knew what it was like."

The first tattoo was inside the basketball. It was of Belcher's initials: S. C. B.

Segado Cortez Belcher (a.k.a. "Cookie") is a true freshman, the only one among the Cornhuskers, who number nine not counting five walk-ons enlisted for practice purposes. Belcher is 18 years old. But his demeanor and physical presence belie his age. "He has come in and shown an unbelievable maturity, a calmness about himself, of listening and learning," Nee said. Belcher is a tough cookie.

It probably should be noted that such word play on his nickname already is commonplace. A newspaper feature on Belcher described him as a "Cookie that isn't going to crumble." The story appeared in late October, before Belcher had settled in as the starting off-guard alongside Tyrone Lue.

Belcher has been called "Cookie" since he was small and regularly raided his grandmother's cookie jar. Now, just about everyone, including his teachers, addresses him as Cookie rather than Segado.

"It doesn't make any difference to me," he said. "It doesn't matter what people call me."

What Nee calls him is a prize recruit, a freshman capable of making an impact. Belcher and Lue, a distant cousin, are a basis for optimism now and in the future for a program that experienced the low of a nine-game losing streak and brief walkout by several players, to the high of an NIT championship a year ago. This season's theme for "Nebrasketball" is: "It's a whole new ball game."

Belcher didn't become an immediate starter because of his lack of numbers. He made "dramatic improvement" from the beginning of practice in mid-October, according to Nee. Plus, he began at a high level. "There were people . . . who were just totally convinced he was a great player," Nee said.

Cornhusker assistant Jimmy Williams was among those people, as was Nee.

There were skeptics, however,

HOOPS

who questioned his size. The 6-foot-3 Belcher, who is slightly heavier than the 200 pounds at which he is listed, played a lot inside at Mexico, Mo., High School. "I played every position . . . well, not center, more like a big forward," Belcher said.

He was a three-year starter and two-time all-state selection, averaging 24.3 points and 8.3 rebounds as a senior.

He led Mexico High to a Class 3-A championship and two runner-ups.

"He played all over the place. But any time I had seen Cookie, I thought he was a very high-level player," said Nee, who recalled sitting with Cincinnati coach Bob Huggins and watching Belcher play in a high school all-star tournament at Las Vegas in the summer before his senior year.

"He (Huggins) just loved his (Belcher's) defense," Nee said. "I loved his defense, too. But what I've been most impressed with is his strength, his rebounding and his ability to learn.

"He doesn't make the same mistake over and over again. And then he has this quiet confidence. He has a toughness about him that I really like. It's unlike a freshman. He doesn't seem nervous at all."

Belcher's confidence was immediately apparent. He scored a team-high 17 points in Nebraska's first exhibition game, an 82-71 victory against a team sponsored by Pella Windows, then scored 21 points in the second exhibition game, an 82-81 victory against a good Marathon Oil team.

His three-point shot at the buzzer won the game. "I was hoping I'd get the ball," he said.

Belcher, like Lue last season, is far ahead of most true freshmen. Because of the team's obvious lack of depth, players will have to accept various roles and responsibilities. The veterans understand that, but the newcomers have had some difficulty in adjusting . . . the newcomers except for Belcher.

The flaming basketball tattoo was still an angry red when Nee inquired about it. Belcher said he had told his mom about it in a telephone conversation after he returned from Ralph's Hungry Eye Tattoo parlor.

"It was like: 'Oh no,'" he said. "She liked the first one. But I don't think she likes big tattoos."

The flaming basketball that surrounds "S.C.B." is fairly prominent.

"I don't think she'll like it," Belcher said. ■

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As entertainer Jimmy Durante used to say, in his unique way: "Everybody wants to get into the act." The Nebraska women's soccer program has fostered such an attitude with its remarkable success this season. Coach

John Walker's office has been inundated with inquiries from would-be recruits.

Many of the top high school soccer players in the nation want to get into the act at Nebraska.

"We're being flooded with calls and letters from recruits," Walker said after the Huskers advanced to the quarterfinals of the NCAA Tournament with a 3-0, second-round victory over Duke.

"We've had probably 10 times the number we had last year," he said.

Husker soccer has been hot, even as the temperature plummeted, reminding the Midwest that winter might arrive and begin its annual visit a little earlier than usual. The temperature was around 20 degrees, with a north wind gusting to 30 miles an hour on the Sunday afternoon of the Duke match.

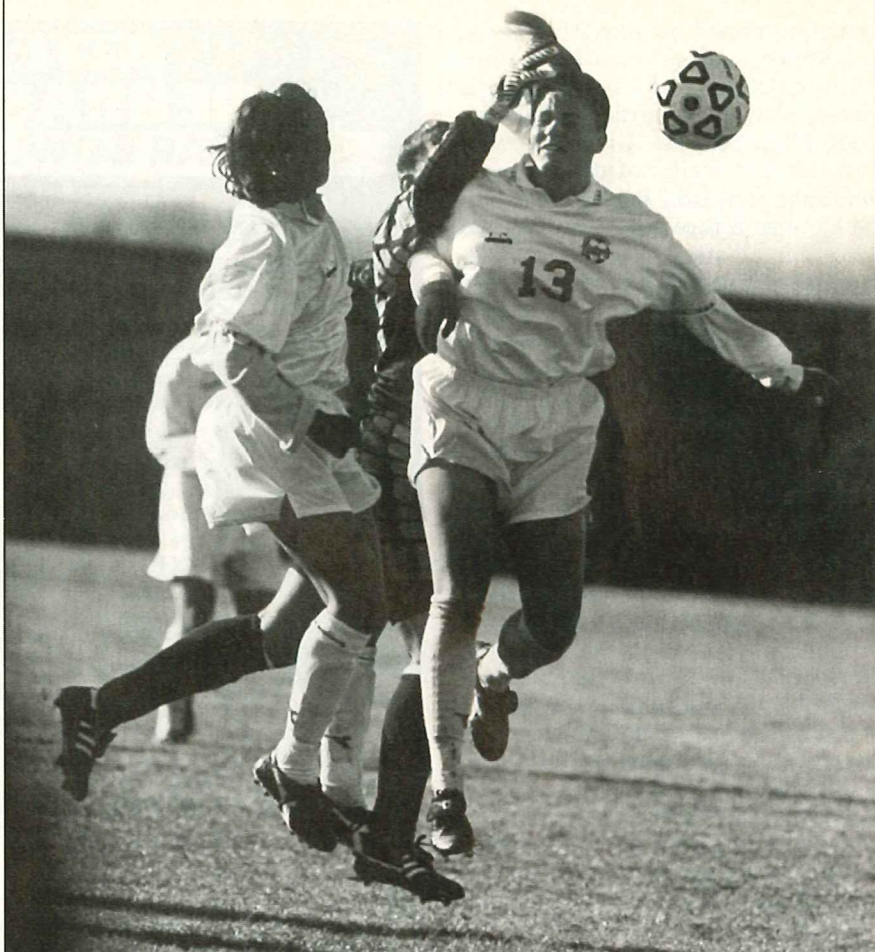
Yet a crowd of more than 1,000 braved the near-zero wind-chill to support the Huskers at the Abbott Sports Complex in Lincoln. The Complex seats between 1,200 and 1,300. "When we came out (to warm up), the place was full . . . or nearly full," Walker said. "I could not believe it."

Nebraska ranked among the nation's leaders in attendance this season, another element of its success. The Huskers regularly drew capacity or near-capacity crowds at home, a far cry from their first match two years ago, when a crowd of 130, mostly friends and relatives of the players, showed up to cheer. Most programs would be encouraged by crowds of 400. That would be a disappointing turnout at Nebraska.

Establishing a fan base for support is important to a young program. That can be difficult when there is no tradition to tap. But "we played a lot on the tradition of the athletic department," said Walker.

Nebraska fans have shown they will support successful programs, whatever the sport.

Of the 1,200 or 1,300 at a Husker



Jon Waller

ON FIRE

The temperature may be dropping in the Midwest, but Nebraska soccer continues to sizzle • by Mike Babcock

match, "maybe half aren't soccer fans per se. They're Nebraska fans. Some have kids who play, soccer families," he said. "And then probably half are soccer fans."

In either case, "I can't believe the affection they have for our team," Walker said.

That's understandable, not only because of the success, but also because of the mix. Walker has recruited nationwide, as well as in his native Canada. But he has been able to establish a recruiting base in Nebraska, which has created a valuable, if not necessary, in-state identity.

The 21-player roster includes five Nebraskans, among them All-Central Region goalkeeper Becky Hornbacher, a junior transfer, and

Kim Ratliff, a co-captain and the team's only senior.

"We'd like to keep that ratio," said Walker. "Whatever good Nebraska (high school) players there are, we want them here. We definitely always want to get the best players in the state."

As in other sports, however, the state's population precludes limiting recruiting to Nebraska. And Walker hasn't hesitated to go after the best players, regardless of where they are.

His ability to recruit has probably been the most important factor in the Huskers' success. They were scheduled to play Portland, the NCAA

Nebraska knocked off Minnesota, 3-2, in overtime in the first first round of the NCAA Tournament.

**ALL
SPORTS**

runner-up last season, in the quarter-finals on Dec. 1 in Portland. With a victory there, Nebraska would advance to the Final Four in Santa Clara, Calif.

Lack of a tradition makes recruiting difficult. Walker acknowledges that. But he hasn't allowed it to

Even though the number of inquiries has increased dramatically, "our talent pool gets smaller, because we're only looking at the very best players now. It's interesting how that works," he said.

Walker's recruiting philosophy doesn't have geographical limits,

the first went 14-4.

During the spring season, the Huskers played national champion Notre Dame and runner-up Portland, as well as Top 20 teams Duke, Wisconsin and Texas A&M and NCAA qualifiers Clemson and Kentucky. "Our philosophy was to

"Too many new programs end up settling for second-best in recruiting. We never did that."

influence his recruiting philosophy. "Too many new programs end up settling for second-best in recruiting," he said. "We never did that. We went against the best programs, head-to-head."

Walker and his assistants have refused to back off in recruiting athletes just because proven powers such as Notre Dame also might have shown an interest. "The toughest thing about that is, it's a lot more work," he said. In addition, "you don't ever like having someone tell you 'no.'"

The chances of getting the signatures of the nation's top players on letters-of-intent "aren't high." But the chances for rejection are. And "taking that rejection is never easy," said Walker.

either. Nebraska's roster includes four Californians, among them freshman Jenny Benson, a first-team all-region pick from Huntington Beach. There also are players from such warm-weather states as Texas and New Mexico.

"We've got 'em," Walker said of the warm-weather recruits. "That hasn't been a problem. I'm not saying geography isn't a factor at all, but the best players want to come to the best programs."

In most cases, anyway, they're not going to pick a program based solely on the weather.

Just as he went after the best in recruiting, Walker scheduled the best to play. That contributed to a less successful record last season. Walker's second team was 10-8, after

play the best teams," said Walker. "And we took our lumps."

But it all came together this season, and only one player will be lost for next season.

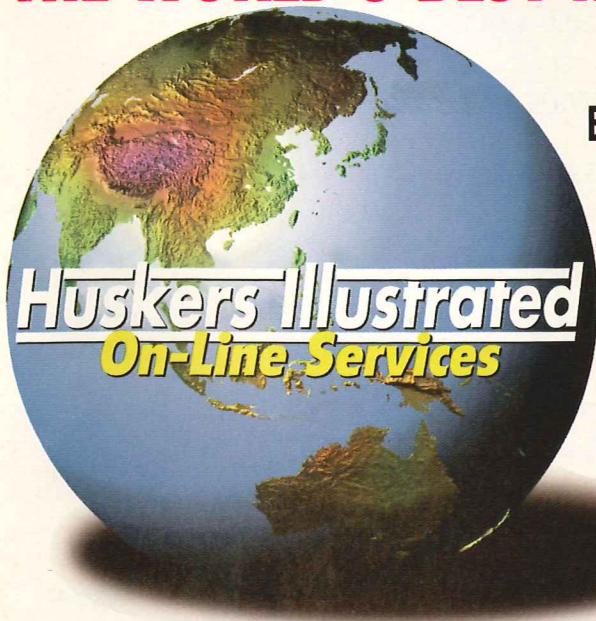
Walker is quoted in the Husker media guide on the prospects for his program's third season: "We hope to make the NCAA Tournament."

Many people might not understand just how difficult it has been. But those who have followed the Nebraska women since their first practice at Whittier Junior High in 1994 understand.

"The fans who have been with us from Day One have a sense of it," Walker said.

Now, it's not just those fans. Everyone, it seems, wants to get into Nebraska's act. ■

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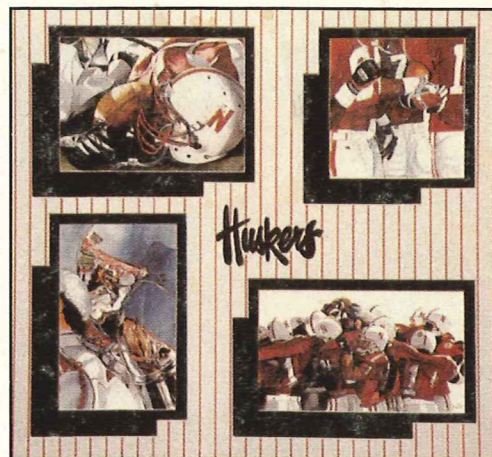
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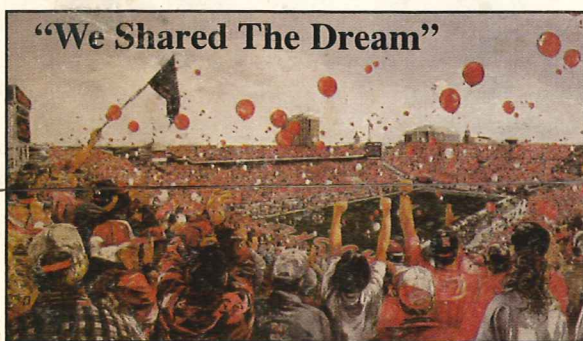
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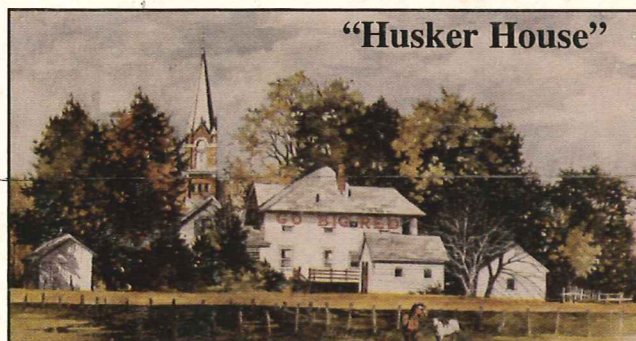
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